LOUISA FORRESTER.

VOL. III.

BRITISH MUSEUM

LOUISA FORRESTER;

OR,

CHARACTERS

DRAWN FROM

REAL LIFE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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manner.—Mr. Egerton, tho' perfectly polite, ſhewed no diſpoſition to renew an acquaintance where he had been ſo coolly treated; but bowed reſpectfully to Louiſa and the company, and walked on rather haſtily.

Juſt before he approached, Lord Archer had joined the company; and, charmed by Miſs Forreſter's vivacity, after he had joined them, as he had been by her perſonal attractions before,—had been beſpeaking Mr. Waldron's intereſt and good offices, which he promiſed, having long known his Lordſhip's family and character; — when Louiſa, inſtigated by that quick, irreſiſtible impulſe, incident to female minds,—caught hold of Mr. Waldron's hand, ſaying, "my dear Sir, that's "Mr. Egerton;—I would give the uni-"verſe to have half an hour's conver-"ſation

"ſation with him.—Will you, Sir, be "kind enough to follow and engage "him to ſup with us? I want to aſk "him a thouſand queſtions about his "ſiſters, and my other friends in the "vicinity of Egerton-Park." "Cer- "tainly, Miſs Forreſter, I will do every "thing in my power to give you ſa- "tisfaction;" and away he poſted after Egerton and his friend.

"Alas, Madam, (whiſpered Lord "Archer, with a ſigh,) my hopes, I "perceive are vain. You have ſent "Mr. Waldron to recal a favoured "lover. I will withdraw and ſigh in "ſecret, and lament the hour, in which "I beheld the only form and mind "which could attract my heart, and at "the ſame inſtant found that mind at- "tached to another."

"What your Lordſhip means I am "utterly unable to gueſs, (replied "Louiſa,) Mr. Egerton is ſo far from "being what you would inſinuate, that "if I would rank him in the number of "my friends, he muſt appear a very "cold one, to reduce me to the neceſ-"ſity of entreating half an hour's chat "with him:—But our mothers were "particular friends;—we were bred up "as brother and ſiſter;—and you ſee, "my Lord, he treats me with a true "brotherly indifference."

At this inſtant Mr. Waldron returned, and told Miſs Forreſter that Mr. Egerton's beſt reſpects awaited her;—he was abſolutely engaged for the evening, but would pay his reſpects to her at her lodgings, on Friday morning, if ſhe was diſengaged; and told his addreſs, that ſhe

ſhe might let him know if the time was not convenient to her.

Stung to the quick by ſuch an evident ſlight, ſhe affected to be highly pleaſed by this teſtimony of brotherly freedom, and turning to Lord Archer, ſaid, "this is an indubitable proof, my Lord, "of what I have been ſaying. Had "there ever been any thing of love be-"tween us, he could ſcarce have been "ſo very indifferent;—and if he had, "I think female pride would not have "permitted me to receive this cool "compliment with compoſure."

His Lordſhip aſſented to the truth of the obſervation, and ſeemed highly pleaſed that his ſuggeſtion was groundleſs. He made ſome enquiries concerning Miſs Forreſter's family and connexions, to which he received an-

ſwers from Mr. Waldron, that were entirely ſatisfactory; and he began to think of Miſs Forreſter in a very ſerious light, as the perſon on whom his future happineſs depended.

After their return from the gardens he ſpent the evening with her at Mr. Waldron's, and waited on her to her lodgings; where every thing appeared to his ſatisfaction. He paid his compliments to her the next morning, and was received with all the friendly politeneſs he could wiſh; and the Miſs Waldrons coming in ſoon after him, he prevailed on all three to accept his coach to Kenſington-Gardens; where they made an agreeable party, and returned to Mr. Waldron's to dinner.

Lord Archer made a point of ſeeing Miſs Forreſter every day; and determined,

termined, by ſome means, to have an excuſe for being at her lodgings the morning Mr. Egerton was to attend her. To make it appear a viſit of propriety, he called on Mr. Waldron on Thurſday morning, and requeſted the favour of his and the ladies' company to the play, as there was a new afterpiece announced, which he was curious to ſee. The propoſal was readily agreed to. The evening was ſpent agreeably; the new piece went off well.—Lord Archer and Miſs Forreſter ſupped at Mr. Waldron's, and his Lordſhip attended her home.

In the morning he called to enquire after her health. He ſent up his name, and was conducted into her dreſſing-room, where ſhe was at breakfaſt.—"Your Lordſhip honours me with your "enquiries early this morning, (look-"ing at her watch,) 'tis not quite

"twelve." "Pardon me, Madam, if "I am improperly intruſive; but my "early appearance is a proof that my "viſit is not merely formal. I hope "Miſs Forreſter will do me the juſtice "to believe, I was rather impelled by "regard than a ſenſe of propriety." "Very polite, my Lord;—have you "breakfaſted?" "I cannot poſitively "anſwer in the affirmative, Madam;— "If you will give me leave, I will take "a cup of tea with you."

The converſation turned on the entertainment of the preceding evening, and juſt as the breakfaſt was removed Mr. Egerton ſent up his name. Louiſa received him with a kind of ſtatelineſs and reſerve. "Good morning to you, "Sir;—you thought you would make "the petitioning female, who would "condeſcend to aſk the favour of your "company,

"company, go thro' a comfortable "trial of patience, before you would "deign to afford her the requeſted tete-"a-tete." "Pardon me, Madam, I "had not the vanity to think myſelf of "conſequence enough to Miſs Forreſter, "to call forth the leaſt exertion of that "amiable virtue."

"Very humbly polite, Sir.—Pray "when did you hear from the Park?— "I have been ſhockingly remiſs in my "correſpondence ſince I came to Town." "I had letters from my ſiſters, yeſ-"terday, Madam,—and am charged "with many compliments and affec-"tionate remembrances to Miſs For-"reſter." "My friends are very "obliging."—"And pray, Madam, "when did you hear from the Grange? "My ſiſter's account of your uncle and "aunt has made me almoſt adore them;

"and I never met a couple ſo formed
"for friendſhip and the ſweets of
"ſocial life, as Captain Rainsford and
"his lady:—Then you had Lord Bel-
"mour, and his mother, and ſiſter, in
"the circle of your friends. I never
"ſaw the ladies of that family; but my
"ſiſter ſpeaks highly of them, and Bel-
"mour was every thing that a man of
"fortune ought to be, when he left the
"Univerſity."

"Indeed, Sir, the families in that
"neighbourhood are under great obli-
"gations to you. One would be led
"to imagine, from your eulogiums, that
"there was not a creature in the uni-
"verſe, worth notice, out of the pre-
"cincts of Hamilton-Grange." "I
"hoped to give Miſs Forreſter plea-
"ſure, by ſpeaking my ſentiments of
"her

" her friends;—and I aſſure her they
" are not mine only."

" No, Sir, (interrupting him haſtily,)
" I dare ſay, MiſsEgerton, and Mr. and
" Mrs. Rainsford, were profuſe in their
" praiſes of Lord Belmour. Mrs. Rains-
" ford gave him a very kind invitation
" to Egerton Park, at her return ; — no
" doubt ſhe had authority for what ſhe
" did." — " From my expreſſions of re-
" gard, Madam, when his Lordſhip hap-
" pened to be named, ſhe might well
" ſuppoſe he would be a welcome gueſt.
" If ſhe made ſuch a concluſion, it was
" a very juſt one."

The converſation now began to be intereſting to Lord Archer. He obſerv'd a kind of eagerneſs and ſarcaſm in Louiſa's manner, when ſhe ſpoke of Lord Belmour, that awoke ſomething like jealouſy

jealouſy in his breaſt. He walked to a window, and took up a book, but knew not a ſyllable of what his eye glanced over. Miſs Forreſter obſerv'd, it was paſſing ſtrange, ſuch a group of worthies could not detain Miſs Egerton longer among them. Mr. Egerton ſaid, he knew of no reaſon for his ſiſter's return, unleſs it was in compliment to him, as he had at that time thoughts of going Abroad, which he had ſince laid aſide; and if he had not ſeen her then, he might not have had another opportunity, for two or three years. He confeſſed he was highly gratify'd by this teſtimony of her affection, and ſhould always remember it with particular ſatisfaction.

"You are extremely happy, Sir, (re-
"plied Louiſa,) in turning every in-
"cident to your advantage;—but it's
"poſſible Miſs Egerton might have
ſome

"ſome motive for her haſty return, be-
"ſides her impatience to ſee her brother.
"She might, perhaps, have a mind to
"try a certain experiment." "Of what
"kind, pray, Madam?" "Only juſt
"to ſee, if the magnet of her charms
"would not have an attractive power
"on the ſteel-caſed heart of Lord Bel-
"mour."

Egerton's aſtoniſhment and diſguſt overcame his politeneſs, and he exclaimed with warmth,—"Is this Miſs
"Forreſter?—Is this the Lady that has
"been my ſiſter's friend from her in-
"fancy?—What did you ever ſee in
"Julia's behaviour, Madam, that could
"induce you to ſtigmatize her with
"ſuch a mean artifice?—But I aſk your
"pardon, Madam, and I aſk this gen-
"tleman's (bowing to Lord Archer);

"I

"I now ſee the reaſon that you could "ſcarce believe me to be Charles "Egerton, when I had laſt the honour "of attending you,—it was becauſe you "had ceaſed to be Miſs Forreſter."—He bowed to both with profound reſpect, and hurried down ſtairs.

Louiſa ſtarted from her chair, and ſtood for ſome ſeconds in a petrified attitude of amazement.—Lord Archer dropped his book, and ſeemed wholly occupied by ſimilar ſenſations. Louiſa, however, recovered herſelf firſt, and affecting a laugh, exclaimed, "what a "romantic ruſtic is this!—Had I been "a man, I fancy my life muſt have paid "for my joke. Did you ever ſee any "thing ſo monſtrouſly rude, my Lord?" "I never was more ſurpriſed, Madam, "nor can I ſcarce give credit to my "ſenſes."

" ſenſes." " That's juſt my caſe, my " Lord, for this tragedy hero, as he now " ſeems to fancy himſelf,—uſed to be " the moſt mild, gentle, playful being, " you can poſſibly conceive."

" Then my ſurpriſe diminiſhes, Ma- " dam; for I have always obſerved " the mildeſt diſpoſitions to have the " trueſt ſpirits when called forth;—and " had Mr. Egerton ſhewn leſs indig- " nation at hearing the dark hints thrown " out againſt his ſiſter by a friend of " her's, he might have appeared a more " polite gentleman; but he muſt have " been looked upon as a very mean and " unaffectionate brother." " Then you " think him quite right, my Lord, and " would have behaved full as cava- " lierly, had you been in his place." " Certainly, Madam, I ſhould have ex-

" preſſed

"preſſed a proper reſentment, had I "heard a ſiſter maligned when I was "conſcious ſhe did not deſerve it,—tho' "the lovely detracter had been dear to "me as my own ſoul."

"Upon my word, my Lord, had Mr. "Egerton and you lived a few centuries "ago, you would have done honour to "the order of Knights Errant; but ne-"ver did I chance to read of one yet, "that eſpouſed the cauſe of his own fa-"mily ſo warmly. Their valour uſed to "be more generous and diffuſive."

"I congratulate your happy turn for "ridicule, Miſs Forreſter; but am not "ambitious of being any longer the "ſubject of it. I ſhall take my leave, "Madam, with aſſuring you, that my "viſit of this morning has been the "happieſt

"happieſt of my whole life; as it has "convinced me there is ſomething ne-"ceſſary to conſtitute a female character, "beſides a fine perſon, a brilliant wit, "and elegant accompliſhments;" and with a polite reverence was departing, —when Louiſa, with quickneſs, ſaid, "ſtay one moment, my Lord, the ad-"venture of this morning has been as "propitious to me as it can have been "to your Lordſhip;—ſince it has con-"vinced me, that the ſexes are more "upon a level in their purſuits, than I "had ever before thought."

"I had vainly imagined, that a po-"lite defference was due to the very "foibles of a ſingle lady;—but thank "my kind ſtars, I have at the ſame "moment met with two inſtances of "ſincerity, that have undeceived me;

"and

" and I now find thoſe that would re-
" tain the favour of you Lords of the
" creation, muſt flatter your foibles and
" propenſities, more than you will con-
" deſcend to favour our's.—Now, my
" Lord, as we are both happily unde-
" ceived, don't you think it would keep
" us both from looking fooliſh, if we
" agreed, when we chance to meet, to
" behave as if nothing of this kind had
" happened."

" I thank you, Madam, for this ob-
" liging hint. I ſhould have propoſed
" ſomething of the ſame kind, had I
" not feared giving Miſs Forreſter freſh
" offence."—With a low courteſy, " my
" Lord, I ought to be thankful for the
" ſmalleſt degree of reſpect, and ſo we
" part to meet as cool civil acquaintance
" in future." " In this point, Madam,
" your

"your will ſhall be my law,"—and they parted with the moſt poignant diſguſt;—but ſo well concealed, that Mr. Waldron's family perceived no change in their behaviour, unleſs, that Lord Archer ſeemed to have relinquiſhed his particular attentions, in the inſtant they began to be obſervable.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXV.

A CLANDESTINE MARRIAGE.

FROM this time Louisa entirely ceased writing to the ladies at Egerton-Park; and her letters to Mrs. Hamilton were so short, formal, and unfrequent, that even the benevolent pen of that excellent woman, was deterred from writing in the unrestrained manner she wished to have done. So that by the time Miss Forrester had been three months in London, she was perfectly estranged from all her friends in the

the country; and ignorant of all their ſchemes and proceedings.

She had formed a genteel and pretty numerous acquaintance, and paſſed her hours in a conſtant ſucceſſion of company and faſhionable amuſements;—and had acquired a new ſet of principles and ideas, in which the friendly intercourſe of rational beings, and the amiable examples of active benevolence and diffuſive charity, amidſt which her former life had been ſpent, found no exiſtence.

It is not to be ſuppoſed, a new face, with every polite accompliſhment, joined to an independent fortune, could paſs ſo long unnoticed.—Many were her admirers;—but her capricious behaviour deterred them all from making any ſerious advances; 'till Sir William Wilkinſon found out the amount of her fortune,

tune, and that ſhe was under no reſtraint from parents or guardians.—From that moment he devoted himſelf to her ſervice, by proſtrating his reaſon at the ſhrine of her vanity; and flattering her foibles with the moſt ſervile adulation.

This was the very lover Louiſa had figured to herſelf; and as ſhe looked upon all the ſacrifices he could make to her beauty, as juſtly due to her, the nearer his addreſſes approached to adoration, the more acceptable they were.

Sir William was what the world calls a man of pleaſure and gallantry. He was left at two-and-twenty in poſſeſſion of a good eſtate, and about *thirty thouſand pounds* in the funds. He was now in his nine-and-twentieth year, and was about *half that ſum* in debt. He had a ſtrong tincture of family pride in his

his diſpoſition;—and as he could not find an inſtance of any mixture of plebeian blood in his pedigree, he could not bear the thoughts of being the firſt to contaminate it, therefore would not look into the City for a wife.

He began to take ſerious thoughts of ſetting ſtrait with the world, retiring from Town, and indulging himſelf with all the luxuries of a country life, which he thought he could do without ſurpaſſing the bounds of his rent-roll. With theſe views he fixed his thoughts on Miſs Forreſter, and had ſo far been ſucceſsful, that ſhe had agreed to empower Mr. Waldron to ſtipulate about ſettlements. She was ſo well ſatisfied with Sir William's behaviour, that ſhe had not a wiſh to find out more than her own penetration had already diſcovered.

While

While matters were in this comfortable train, as Miſs Forreſter was going one morning to call upon the Miſs Waldrons and ſome other friends, to collect a party for airing,—juſt as ſhe was ſtepping into her chair, her eye was caught by a moſt beautiful female figure, approaching the door with haſty tremulous ſteps.—Louiſa ſtopped;—her long ſmothered ſenſations crowded upon her with irreſiſtible force. She ſaw the moſt poignant diſtreſs depicted in the palid face of the young lady; and with an involuntary motion ſhe advanced towards her. The ſtranger attempted to courteſy, and to ſpeak at the ſame inſtant; but her too much agitated ſpirits forſook her, and ſhe dropped ſenſeleſs upon the earth.

Louiſa ordered the chairmen to convey her carefully into the houſe, and following, directed them to her dining-room.

room. A flood of tenderneſs ruſhed into her boſom, and ſhe diſmiſſed them, telling them ſhe ſhould not want them that day. She ſent her maid to requeſt the miſtreſs of the houſe would attend her. They placed the fair unknown on the ſopha, and uſed every means they could deviſe to recal her to life, which at length proved effectual.

When ſhe firſt opened her eyes ſhe looked eagerly and wildly round her, and after a long pauſe, exclaimed, "Good heavens! where am I? I hoped "the bitterneſs of death was paſt. Me-"thought a pitying angel beam'd ce-"leſtial effulgence on my cloſing eye, "and was conveying my care-worn "ſoul to the manſions of peace; where "the wicked ceaſe from troubling, and "the weary penitent may at laſt find "reſt." Miſs Forreſter and Mrs. Morden

adminiſtered every cordial to her conſtitution, and every conſolation to her mind that tenderneſs could ſuggeſt. She grew compoſed, and regarding them all with deep attention, ſaid to Miſs Forreſter, "I now recollect, Madam, it "was your benign countenance that "darted a ray of commiſerating ten-"derneſs on my benighted ſoul, when "I ſunk at your feet. May I be per-"mitted the favour of your ear alone?— "but I fear my requeſt will be trouble-"ſome.—Why ſhould a wretch like me, "wiſh to damp the enjoyment of thoſe "who are innocent and happy."

Louiſa's heart was ſoftened;—ſhe took her hand with tenderneſs, "No apo-"logies, my dear Madam; I ſhall be "happy to ſerve you.—Mrs. Morden, "I thank you for your aſſiſtance.— "Kitty you may retire."

When

When they were left alone, the ſtranger ſeveral times attempted to ſpeak, but the faultering accents died on her trembling lips; at length, with a ſtrong effort, ſhe ſaid, "pardon me, Madam, for the "trouble an unhappy creature has invo-"luntarily given you. Can you kindly "direct me to a Mr. Albany*, who, I "have been told, lodges ſomewhere "about this place? He has, they ſay, "been miſerable himſelf, and thinks it "the higheſt gratification he can taſte, "to relieve the miſerable. I thought I "could unfold my afflictions to one "who had drank deeply of the bitter "cup himſelf, and ſet out this morning "to find him; when my ſtrength and "over tried ſpirits failed me, and I "dropped down at your hoſpitable "door.'"

* See the character of Mr. Albany in the elegant novel of Cecilia.

"I have heard of ſuch a perſon, (re-
"plied Louiſa,) but know not his re-
"ſidence;—and have heard him men-
"tioned as a perſon of forbidding ad-
"dreſs and harſh manners:—therefore
"very unfit for a lady, in your preſent
"dejected ſtate of mind, to converſe
"with. He is a ſtranger by your man-
"ner of ſpeaking, both to your perſon
"and circumſtances. If my queſtion
"is not impertinent, could not you con-
"fide as properly in a ſtranger of your
"your own ſex?—I am, really, much
"intereſted in your behalf, and if you
"think I can be of any ſervice to you,
"you have only to tell me in what
"manner, and command me to the
"utmoſt extent of my power."

The unhappy ſtranger dropped her languid head;—her cheeks were at one inſtant ſuffuſed with a faint bluſh, at another

another covered with an aſhy paleneſs. At length, with a noble collectedneſs of mind, ſhe ſaid, "angelic lady, I will "repoſe all my ſorrows on your ge- "nerous breaſt. If by my weakneſs "I have brought ſhame upon myſelf, "I ought to mortify myſelf by acknow- "ledging it.—My father was an of- "ficer.—I have heard he fought bravely "and died in the ſervice of his country. "His name was Wilmot.—I lived hap- "pily with my dear worthy mother and "an amiable ſiſter, upon a comfortable "annuity, and had a genteel fortune in "expectancy at the death of a relation "of my father's;—'till a gentleman of "the name of Wilkinſon, who was on "a viſit at Sir Wiloughby Greville's, "at Wiloughby-Caſtle, about a mile "from my mother's, took a vacant "houſe in that neighbourhood, for a "hunting ſeat."

"Wilkinſon, (interrupted Louiſa) "was it Sir William Wilkinſon?"— "It was, I hope I give no offence, Ma- "dam.—I hope he is no friend of "your's;—if he is, I ſay no more."— "No, Madam, no friend of mine,— "only I had heard of ſuch a perſon.— "Pray go on."—She proceeded,—"I "often met with Sir William at a Mr. "Welington's, where I viſited;—he "was particular in his attentions to me, "'till he ſaw he had gained an intereſt "in my heart.—He then addreſſed me "with all the reſpectful diffidence of "honourable love, for about two months, "and with the fair ſeeming guiſe of "ſincerity, lamented the neceſſity of con- "cealing for a time his deareſt affections. "He had an aunt, he ſaid, on whom he "had great dependancies, who had "propoſed a very advantageous match "to him, on which ſhe had fixed her "mind;

" mind;—but which he could by no
" means accede to, and had put it off
" from time to time.—That the old
" lady was then in a deep decline, and
" given over by her phyſicians,—had
" ſent for him to attend her, which he
" could not poſſibly excuſe himſelf from
" doing,—and, as he ſaid, he ſhould be
" miſerable to an extreme if he was
" obliged to leave me behind, he
" urged me to conſent to a private mar-
" riage; which, he ſaid, alone could ſe-
" cure the only bleſſing life had in ſtore
" for him, without giving unpardonable
" offence to his aunt:—as, ſhould ſhe
" preſs him to an immediate marriage,
" which he rather expected ſhe would,
" he was ſure ſhe would ſooner be recon-
" ciled to the thought of his being ac-
" tually married, than if he pleaded an
" engagement of his affections only. She
" might think it his duty to ſacrifice his

" hopes of happineſs to her authority;
" but if I would condeſcend to comply
" with this ardent wiſh of his ſoul, he
" could make her believe the union had
" taken place before ſhe firſt ſignified
" her wiſhes, and that he only concealed
" it to avoid giving her offence.—Then
" (paying me a compliment, which I
" own, at the time greatly flattered my
" vanity,) he added, if this ſhould be
" the caſe, I have only to introduce my
" beloved Anna to her, and when ſhe
" beholds that love-fraught eye, that
" ſweet ſenſibility irradiating every fea-
" ture, I know ſhe muſt pardon,—muſt
" approve of my choice."

" Many arguments to the ſame ten-
" dency were preſſed with ſuch an ap-
" parent ardour of affection, and my too
" ſuſceptible heart, alas! joining its in-
" tereſt, I found myſelf unequal to the
" taſk

" taſk of refuſing to take this fatal ſtep;
" tho' the little prudence I was miſtreſs
" of, and my native delicacy filled me
" with horror at the idea of a clandeſtine
" marriage. Ah, Madam! when a falſe
" friend within takes the enemy's part,
" how eaſy is the conqueſt? I agreed to
" comply with his wiſhes; but my great
" difficulty was how to break the affair
" to my mother, and gain her conſent."

" No, my deareſt Anna, he replied,
" that muſt not be. The ſecret muſt
" be as carefully concealed from *our*
" amiable mother (for, indeed, my
" Anna, ſhe muſt be mine as well as
" your's) as from any other perſon in
" the world, and this thought is the on-
" ly one that gives me diſtreſs; becauſe
" I fear, it will give ſome pain to her
" and you. But I have thought of an ex-
" pedient, that, I hope, will make you

"both quite eaſy.—I haſtily enquired "what it was?—He ſaid, I muſt write "a letter, and leave it for my mother, "requeſting her to make herſelf per-"fectly ſatisfied, and to pardon the "ſeemingly raſh ſtep I had taken; and "that ſhe might reſt aſſured in a very "few weeks I ſhould render her happy "beyond her moſt ſanguine expecta-"tions, by having it in my power to "declare myſelf ſo. I ſhewed this let-"ter to Sir William,—he approved it, "and the next day was fixed on for "our departure.

"Early on that fatal afternoon, I "pretended to be going to make a "friendly viſit. I could not be guilty "of an abſolute breach of truth, ſo juſt "called on the lady, and told her I was "going further. Ah! ever have I to "regret every unhappy ſtep I have ta-

"ken

" ken ſince I left her door. At a ſmall
" diſtance Sir William was waiting with
" a chaiſe and four, and one ſervant on
" horſeback: Heavens! how my heart
" ſunk! What a univerſal tremor
" ſeized me when I ſtepped into the
" vehicle which was deſtined to convey
" me to remedileſs miſery!"

" Sir William ſoothed me by every
" tender attention. The chaiſe drove
" at a great rate, and juſt at duſk, ſtopped
" at a decent Inn, in a ſmall pleaſant
" looking village. He ſaid, we would
" not attempt to go further that night,
" leaſt I ſhould ſuffer from fatigue and
" the hurry of my ſpirits;—and he
" hoped, I would conſent to make him
" the happieſt of men, ere he left that
" place in the morning."

" I

"I was ſilent. He ſaid he would in-
"terpret my ſilence to his own ad-
"vantage. My heart was full;—I
"could not utter a ſyllable;—but I
"bowed my aſſent. He thanked me for
"my tranſcendent goodneſs, (as he was
"pleaſed to call it) with ſuch affecti-
"onate ecſtaſy, that I ſoon grew per-
"fectly ſatisfied, and even exulted in
"the pleaſing idea of contributing to
"the *happineſs* of the only man I had
"ever ſeen, who I thought capable of
"conferring it upon me. We had a neat
"little ſupper well dreſſed, and well
"ſerved, and Sir William gave orders
"for the beſt room they had to be well
"aired for my reception, and the next
"beſt for himſelf."

"He was ſeveral times out of the
"room giving orders to his ſervants,
"and told me he was making the ne-
"ceſſary

"ceſſary preparations for the happy
"event of to-morrow, that nothing
"might happen to impede our journey.
"I retired early to my apartment. My
"mind was too much agitated to allow
"of repoſe;—but I ſhould have thought
"myſelf the happieſt being that exiſted,
"had I not been deeply depreſſed by
"reflecting on the anxiety my poor mo-
"ther and ſiſter at that inſtant laboured
"under, on my account.—But I con-
"ſoled myſelf with thinking, that it
"would be but a few weeks,—perhaps
"but a few days, ere I ſhould have it
"in my power to make them ample
"reparation for what they now ſuffered."

"I roſe early in the morning. When
"I came into the parlour, I found Sir
"William ſitting with a genteel young
"man in black;—he ſaluted me with
"the moſt reſpectful tenderneſs, and

'pre-

"presented the gentleman to me as
"the clergyman of the village, and
"told me every thing now waited my
"pleasure.—I bowed, the stranger looked
"at his watch, and said it would be
"eight o'clock by the time we were at
"church. He asked who attended us.
"Sir William asked if one witness was
"sufficient. He replied they generally
"had two, but it was only matter of
"form, and as he was desirous of pri-
"vacy, he could well dispense with it.
"Sir William ordered breakfast to be
"ready against our return from a walk
"in the village, and telling his servant
"to follow him, we soon reached the
"Church,—the key of which had been
"previously procured from the clerk.—
"The licence and ring were produced,
"and the ceremony performed with due
"solemnity."

"We

"We returned to the Inn and break-
"faſted. Sir William was all ten-
"derneſs and gratitude, and my heart
"taſted a ſatisfaction unknown before.
"A handſome preſent was made to the
"clergyman, who with the politeſt
"wiſhes of happineſs, and promiſes of
"ſecrecy departed, and we purſued our
"rout to town."

"On our arrival I was conducted to
"an elegant ſet of apartments, had a
"footman and maid, who were recom-
"mended by the miſtreſs of the houſe,
"who was a genteel elderly woman,
"and ſeemed an entire ſtranger to Sir
"William, but behaved with extreme
"reſpect, and hoped his friend had ex-
"ecuted his orders to his ſatisfaction.
"He politely appealed to me. Every
"thing was beyond my expectation,
"and I had only to praiſe and admire.

"Sir

"Sir William then addreſſed the old "lady,—Mrs. Crumpton, (I think my "friend mentioned you by that name,) "you are to know I have not long had "the honour and happineſs of calling "this lady mine, and there are at pre- "ſent ſome family reaſons why we wiſh "for a ſmall time to conceal it; there- "fore, Mrs. Guildford will, much to my "mortification, ſpend a good deal of "her time at home. I ſhall take all "poſſible opportunities of being with "her, in the ſweet domeſtic way, as "much as poſſible;—but as ſhe is quite "a ſtranger in town, I fear her time will "ſometimes want a little filling up. "You underſtand me, Mrs. Crumpton. "Now if you happen to have any "genteel lodgers that you could with "propriety introduce her to, I ſhould "eſteem it a favour."

"My

" My heart glowed with grateful af-
" fection, I thanked him for his tender
" care, but aſſured him, while I had an
" harpſichord, ſome books, and his
" image in my heart, I could never
" want company or amuſement."

" Well, Madam, (ſaid Mrs. Crump-
" ton,) whenever your ladyſhip is diſ-
" poſed for company, or his honour and
" you have a mind to make a ſnug party
" by way of a little variety, I have the
" honour of having two ladies in my
" houſe, Lady Blaney and Miſs Stock-
" ton, who, I think, will be happy in
" your acquaintance. — Sir William
" thanked her for her civility and ſhe
" withdrew. The next day he went
" to viſit his aunt, who, he told me, was
" very weak, but rejoiced to ſee him,
" and ſaid nothing of the marriage ſhe
" had ſo often preſſed."

" My

"My hours rolled almoſt imper-
"ceptibly away for the firſt month after
"I came to town. Sir William's ab-
"ſences were ſhort, and his behaviour
"the moſt tender and aſſiduous ima-
"ginable. His accounts of his aunt's
"health were various, but ſtill he was
"happy that ſhe never ſaid a word to
"him about the lady;—therefore he
"concluded, ſhe had given up all
"thoughts of the matter, and we had
"nothing to do but wait with patience.
"My patience, indeed, had nothing to
"exerciſe it, but the thoughts of my
"mother and ſiſter; and they were not
"ſo frequent in my mind as when I firſt
"arrived.

"The ladies Mrs. Crumpton menti-
"oned, were introduced to us. They
"were chearful and agreeable, and
"Sir William ſeemed much pleaſed

"with

"with their acquaintance. He ſome-
"times would preſent them with tick-
"ets, and aſk them to accompany us
"to the play; and ſometimes make a
"party for an airing, and requeſted me
"to invite them to drink tea or ſup
"with me when he was obliged to be
"abſent."

"In about five weeks he told me he
"had ſome friends arrived in Town,
"that neceſſarily engroſſed a great deal
"of his time, and that I muſt not always
"expect to ſee him at night, as he
"ſhould often be obliged to ſpend late
"evenings, and then it would be incon-
"venient, perhaps dangerous, to come ſo
"far as where theſe lodgings were ſi-
"tuated.—I thought he had laid aſide
"a good deal of his accuſtomed ten-
"derneſs; but I did not preſume to take
"notice of it."

"I

"I now did not ſee him above two "or three times a week; and, me-"thought, his coldneſs increaſed at "every viſit.—I grew dejected, but I "made no complaint. I enquired one "day after his aunt's ſtate of health;— "he replied, ſhe was very weak, but "might linger a good while; and that "ſhe was grown ſo exceedingly fond of "his company, that ſhe inſiſted on his "reſiding wholly in her houſe,—which "he had promiſed to do, as the ſituation "was very convenient for his other en-"gagements.—In ſpite of all my ef-"forts to the contrary I burſt into tears. "He laughed at me, and called me a "fool, and aſked me if I thought when "a man was married, he was to be "pinned to his wife's apron ſtrings.—I "was ſo chilled and aſtoniſhed at his be-"haviour, that I was unable to make "any reply. He told me I might

"ſpend

"ſpend my time very agreeably with "the ladies of the houſe, and I might be "ſure he ſhould ſee me as often as he "could make it convenient, and left "me abruptly."

"I remained for ſeveral hours in a "ſtate of torpid anguiſh. I could not "believe myſelf to be the late happy "Mrs. Guildford.—I knew not what "or who I was;—but I found myſelf "precipitated from the height of hap-"pineſs to the depth of miſery, without "a friend to whom I could complain, "or from whom I could aſk advice.— "I wiſhed to write to my mother,— "but alas! I could not complain of "the huſband I had choſen; therefore "I had nothing to do but wait with "patience, for a return of his kindneſs "and affection, which I was not con-

"ſcious

"ſcious of having forfeited by any inde-
"corum or want of attention."

"In the afternoon Lady Blaney ſent
"me an invitation to drink tea and
"ſpend the evening with her.—I ex-
"cuſed myſelf as being indiſpoſed, as
"I really was.—Miſs Stockton ſent up
"her name and requeſted to ſpeak with
"me.—I could not with civility re-
"fuſe to ſee her.—She was in high ſpi-
"rits, and told me they could not diſ-
"penſe with my abſence. She had a re-
"lation juſt come to Town that I had
"not ſeen, and they could not make a
"party without me. I could not bear
"to be thought rude or ill-natured,
"therefore reſtrained my melancholy as
"well as I could, and accompanied
"Miſs Stockton to Lady Blaney's
"apartment.—There was a gentleman,
"and two or three ladies, I had not

"ſeen

"ſeen before. They were extremely
"vivacious, and I partook of their
"mirth as well as I could."

"When ſupper was brought in,
"Lady Blaney ſent to requeſt the fa-
"vour of Mrs. Crumpton's company.
"She came, and with great ceremony
"inſiſted upon taking the loweſt ſeat;
"but I thought ſhe was groſſly free in
"her behaviour, as after ſupper ſhe
"propoſed toaſts, and was for circu-
"lating the glaſs as gentlemen do. I
"was diſguſted and would have retired,
"but was prevailed on to ſtay, with
"permiſſion to do as I pleaſed."

"I was ſo much diſſatisfied with the
"company this evening, that it was ſe-
"veral weeks ere I was prevailed on to
"ſpend another out of my own apart-
"ment.—I was a perfect recluſe, and
"never

"never ſtirred out, unleſs to Church.—
"The ladies before mentioned would
"ſometimes ſend up their names, and
"I could not with good manners re-
"fuſe to ſee them; but I was always ſo
"dull and ſpiritleſs, that they were glad
"to ſhorten their viſits. My footman
"gave me warning, alledging for a
"reaſon, that as I never went out, or
"ſaw company, I had nothing for him
"to do, and he could make a better uſe
"of his time.—I knew he was right,
"and as I did not know where to di-
"rect him to his maſter, I paid and
"diſmiſſed him."

"In this manner I dragged on an
"inſupportable load of miſery, for more
"than two months, hoping every day
"would bring my beloved huſband to
"my longing eyes; and every evening

"la-

"lamenting that my hopes had been "in vain."

"I was one day particularly preſſed to "ſpend the evening with Miſs Stock- "ton and a party of friends.—After "ſupper we ſat down to cards.—Mrs. "Crumpton and two gentlemen I had "not ſeen before, were preſent. In the "courſe of the evening, one of the gen- "tlemen aſked Miſs Stockton, if ſhe "had heard that Sir William Wilkinſon "was on the eve of matrimony.—No, "ſhe replied, nor would ſhe believe it, "if ſhe heard it a thouſand times. Men "of his character were ſeldom drawn "in on the right ſide of forty. The "gentleman ſaid it was a fact, that he "heard it from Sir William's own "mouth, who told him that the lady's "fortune was convenient for him, and "her perſon was all he could wiſh."

"I cannot attempt to deſcribe my "emotions.—Such a crowd of ideas "ruſhed upon my mind, ſuch an aſſem- "blage of diſmal forebodings over- "whelmed me, that I ſunk inſenſibly "on the floor. When I awoke from this "enviable ſtate, I found myſelf in bed, "and Lady Blaney, Mrs. Crumpton, "and my maid, applying proper reme- "dies. What I might ſay at my firſt "return to ſenſe and ſpeech, I know "not; but, as ſoon as I grew a little "collected, I determined to conceal the "cauſe of my indiſpoſition, if it were "poſſible. To their enquiries I replied "I was better, endeavoured to apolo- "gize for the trouble I had given, and "requeſted to be left to my repoſe. "They kindly inſiſted on ſtaying with "me, 'till I was inclined to ſleep."

Miſs

"Miſs Stockton ſoon after came into "the room, and expreſſed much plea- "ſure to find me recovered. She ſat "down on the bed, and with an eye "that ſeemed to penetrate the inmoſt re- "ceſſes of my ſoul, ſaid, "do you know "Sir William Wilkinſon, Mrs. Guild- "ford?—It was extremely odd that Mr. "Seldon's information ſhould have ſuch "an effect on a married lady;—perhaps "he had been a former lover of your's, "madam?" I replied, (I believe with "ſome aſperity,) "Sir William ſeems to "be too well known to you, Madam, "for it to be neceſſary to aſk me ſuch a "queſtion." She looked diſpleaſed, "and ſaid, ſhe did not underſtand me. "I told her it was of no conſequence, "and if ſhe pleaſed we would drop the "ſubject; for I believed my head was "not clear.—She ſaid ſhe fancied it "was not, and wiſhing me a good night,

"left the room. I pretended to be
"sleepy, and by that pretext was deli-
"vered from my officious attendants, in
"whose countenances I thought I per-
"ceived something of mystery, that set
"my tortured imagination on the rack.

"I passed the night in a state little
"short of distraction. I revolved in my
"mind many incidents that ought to
"have roused my attention, but I had
"suffered myself to be soothed into a
"fatal lethargy, from which nothing
"could awake me but the keenest darts
"of affliction.—I endeavoured to fix on
"some scheme to relieve my agonized
"heart. I thought I would write to Sir
"William, but I had never heard him
"mention his aunt's name, nor where
"she lived. This raised fresh doubts
"in my mind. Why should he not
"have told every little circumstance to

"a

"a wife on whom he ſeemed to have "placed his fondeſt affection,—and "who, by the ſacrifice ſhe had made, "merited his confidence?—After many "painful conſiderations, and heart-rend-"ing reflections on my preſent ſituation, "I recollected that Sir William's Town "Houſe was in Portman-Square; and I "thought his ſervants there would cer-"tainly know where to ſend any letters "directed thither."

"I determined to write to him in the "morning, and in that determination "endeavoured to compoſe myſelf,—but "in vain. I aroſe early and wrote ſe-"veral letters ere I could pleaſe myſelf, "but thought no time was to be loſt;— "therefore I told him the plain tale of "my exquiſite diſtreſs, begged with great "humility that he wou'd be pleaſed to "extricate me from it, in whatever way

" would be moſt conducive to his own
" ſatisfaction, and that I might have the
" happineſs of ſeeing him as ſoon as poſ-
" ſible after that letter had reached his
" hand."

" When I had finiſhed it, I was going
" out at the time I generally went to
" prayers at a church in the neighbour-
" hood, when Mrs. Crumpton met me
" at the door, and with an unaccuſtomed
" freedom aſked me where I was going?
" I reply'd, "to church, madam:—am I
" uſed to go any where elſe?"—She did
" not think I was well enough to ven-
" ture out. I ſaid, I hoped I was the
" beſt judge of my own health, and I
" was perfectly well. She deſired my
" maid might accompany me, leaſt I
" ſhould have another fit.—I ſaid, I
" ſhould do as I liked, and ſhe left me
" with

" with a look that I neither liked nor un-
" derſtood."

" I haſtened to a place where I had
" often ſeen a porter ſtand ſoliciting em-
" ployment. I found him, and aſked
" him what he muſt have for taking a
" letter to Portman-Square?—he told
" me ſixpence; I gave him a ſhilling,
" and deſired he would take it imme-
" diately.—He promiſed he would, and
" as ſoon as he ſaw the direction, he ex-
" claimed, " O! God bleſs his honour,
" I know him and his houſe very well;—
" he's a mighty good gentleman!" and
" away he poſted, and I went to
" church."

" At my return, in going up ſtairs I
" met Lady Blaney, ſhe ſpoke civil, but
" I thought had a ſneer in her coun-
" tenance. I retired to my chamber

" and remained in that agitated ſtate of " mind that defies deſcription. When " told my dinner was ſerved, I tried to " compoſe myſelf, ſat down, took ſome- " thing upon my plate, looked at it for " a minute, ſaid I had dined, and re- " tired to my cloſet."

" In the evening I received a letter " from Sir William,—but, good hea- " vens!—what were all the miſeries " I had yet experienced, to what I was " now deſtined to ſuffer?—He told me " I muſt be content with the conſe- " quences of my own imprudence;— " that I had no proof of my marriage, " nor would it avail me if I had.—That " the gentleman who performed the " mock ceremony was one of his ſer- " vants, dreſſed up for that purpoſe;— " that he had treated me with a journey " to town, and made me preſents ſuffi-

" cient

" cient to defray my expences down
" again, tho', he thought I might con-
" tinue very comfortably where I was;—
" that the *blooming widow Guildford*,
" would be ſure never to want admirers,
" and would find a kind friend in Mrs.
" Crumpton, and agreeable aſſociates in
" the ladies of her family, who would
" give me any inſtructions, in the way of
" life he recommended to me;—charged
" me to give him no further trouble, as
" he ſhould return any future letters un-
" opened;—that the account I had heard
" of his approaching nuptials was true;
" —that I ſhould do well to make my-
" ſelf content in my preſent ſituation,
" and never think of ſeeing him more,
" as it could avail me nothing, his de-
" termination being unalterable."

" I now thought the meaſure of my
" calamities compleat.—I retired to my

" chamber, and prayed in the bitterneſs
" of my ſoul, that I might never behold
" the light of another day.—The im-
" pious petition was not granted!—alas!
" how dare mortals preſume to dictate to
" omnipotence? — I aroſe from my
" thorny pillow with tolerable health,
" tho' with depreſſed ſpirits, and was
" going to Church,—when Lady Bla-
" ney met me at the door, and requeſted
" my company for half an hour in her
" apartment, with ſuch earneſtneſs, that
" I could not refuſe her. The great
" affair was to give my opinion of pat-
" terns of ſilks ſhe had juſt had brought
" in."

" The dreadful hint Sir William had
" given of the way of life of the ladies of
" the family, (as he called them,) made
" me ſhudder at the thought of accom-
" panying her;—but a moment's conſi-

" deration

" deration convinced me that it was ne-
" ceſſary to conceal my ſuſpicions 'till I
" could leave the houſe, tho' I knew not
" where to go. I therefore attended her.
" While the patterns were under diſcuſ-
" ſion, a middle aged gentleman entered
" the room, and addreſſing Lady Bla-
" ney with great freedom, and making a
" ſlight bow to me, ſaid, " well, Fanny,
" what weighty affair's going forward
" now?—what pretty privy counſellor
" have you got here?" She replied, with
" great eaſe, (and I thought boldneſs)
" that it was a Mrs. Guildford, who had
" lodgings in the houſe, and ſometimes
" favoured her with a viſit."

" Guildford,—Guildford, (ſaid he,)
" I don't know him;—has he a houſe in
" town?" " I don't know, my Lord, (ſhe
" replied,) but he is at preſent attending
" a ſick aunt, and Mrs. Guildford has

" of

" of late had but little of his company."
" That's pity, (replied he,) well ſuch
" things will happen.—No doubt he
" conſoles himſelf with ſome other fair
" damſel during his abſence, and, I
" hope, Mrs. Guildford will follow his
" example.—I come to take you an air-
" ing, Fanny;—prevail upon your
" friend to bear us company."

" I was all confuſion and aſtoniſh-
" ment. I aroſe and approached the
" door with an involuntary motion;
" when, recollecting myſelf, I ſtopped
" and wiſhed them a good morning,
" ſaying I was engaged.—Lady Blaney
" affected a laugh, and exclaimed, " en-
" gaged, Mrs. Guildford?—how can you
" be engaged now your deary is away?
" upon my word I never ſaw ſo fond a
" couple:—But nothing can laſt always
" my Lord, and we ladies ought to
" make

"make the beſt of our time." I replied, "I knew my own avocations beſt, and "with a cool compliment retired precipitately. I locked myſelf up in my "cloſet, and offered up my fervent "prayer to that being who could comfort or direct my bewildered mind."

"When Lady Blaney and her companion returned, ſhe ſent to aſk my "company at dinner.—I had juſt come "to a reſolution to write to my mother, "and tell her all my unhappy ſtory.— "I ſent an apology, and told my maid "I was buſy and could not have time "to dine, and ordered her to bring me "a bit of bread and a glaſs of water. "When ſhe returned with it, ſhe ſaid, "Mrs. Crumpton was much diſturbed, "and ſaid, I had a mind to ſtarve myſelf to death, becauſe Sir William had "left me.—"Sir William left me!—

"what

"what Sir William?—who does ſhe "mean?" "I aſk pardon, Madam.—She "meant Mr. Guildford, I dare ſay, only "ſhe was in ſuch a flutter." "No, I don't "intend to hurt myſelf; but am very "buſy, and ſo leave me." She did, and I "was now too plainly convinced, that "the baſe deceiver, and theſe infamous "women, acted in concert, and were all "in league againſt me."

"In the afternoon Miſs Stockton ſent "up her compliments and requeſted to "take her tea with me, hearing I was "alone, as ſhe was a good deal out of "ſpirits, and thought my company "would be a relief to her. To this re-"queſt I could not ſend a refuſal, tho' "my heart revolted at ſeeing any one of "the family. She came, and I flattered "myſelf had a kind of ſympathizing "tenderneſs in her countenance. Our

"tea

"tea was far from being a chearful re-
"freſhment. She ſeemed diſconcerted
"and reſerved. I endeavoured to con-
"ceal my perturbation, but I believe did
"it very awkwardly. In the evening
"we had a very preſſing invitation to
"ſup with Mrs. Crumpton. She ſent
"word ſhe had a few ſelect friends, and
"hoped they would be quite agreeable
"to us. I poſitively declined it at firſt,
"but at length ſuffered myſelf to be pre-
"vailed on by Miſs Stockton, who ſaid
"ſhe was by no means in a humour
"for company, but thought it would
"look diſobliging, and whenever I
"choſe to withdraw ſhe would accom-
"pany me."

"Thus urged and perſuaded, I con-
"ſented. We found a pretty large com-
"pany, and a very genteel collation.
"Mrs. Crumpton ſeemed in high ſpirits,

"and

" and was particularly attentive to me.
" I ſoon perceived the two gentlemen
" that ſupped with me in Miſs Stock-
" ton's apartment were preſent, and two
" or three ladies I had not ſeen before.

" When ſupper was ended, Mrs.
" Crumpton puſhed the glaſs about in
" ſuch a manner as I thought by no
" means became a female character.
" The gentlemen ſeconded her, and the
" ladies conformed without oppoſition;
" —even Miſs Stockton did not ſeem
" much to heſitate.—I was abſorbed in
" thought, and contemplated the group
" before me as a ſet of beings that diſ-
" graced humanity. Mrs. Crumpton
" preſſed me to drink a glaſs of wine,
" which ſhe recommended as her own
" favourite liquor. I poſitively refuſed
" it, and would drink nothing but wa-
" ter.—She propoſed a ſong from every

" perſon

"perſon in company, and deſired one "of the gentlemen to begin with the "ſong ſhe admired; but he ſung ſuch "an immodeſt, lewd compoſition, that "an ear, not entirely diveſted of every "delicate idea, could not bear it."

"I aroſe ere it was finiſhed, and tap-"ping Miſs Stockton on the ſhoulder, "bid her remember her promiſe, for I "thought we had ſtayed too long.—She "looked at me with an air of ſurpriſe, "and exclaimed aloud, "Lord, Mrs. "Guildford, don't be ſo prudiſh,—you "would not leave the company now we "juſt begin to enjoy ourſelves?" I re-"plied, "if you enjoy this company, Miſs "Stockton, I wiſh you joy of it.—Mrs. "Crumpton I wiſh you a good night." "I took up a candle, and at the door "courteſy'd to the company, and with-"drew."

"As

"As I pulled the door after me, I "heard one of the gentlemen, (rather in "a low voice) ſay, "Mrs. Crumpton, "you won't let her leave us ſo, will you?" "Yes, yes, replied ſhe, I muſt humour "her for a few days; but I'll ſoon bring "her to reaſon, never fear." I durſt "not ſtay to hear more leaſt they ſhould "follow and inſult me; but retired with "haſte to my apartment and locked my-"ſelf in. It were needleſs to attempt "to deſcribe the manner in which I "ſpent the night, to a lady of ſenſi-"bility, — to a heart deſtitute of that "amiable quality, my language could "give no idea of it."

"I had wrote to my mother to en-"treat her to receive her poor diſtreſſed "wanderer, but had not ſent my letter; "and, if I had, I durſt not have ven-"tured to ſtay in that bad houſe (for

"ſuch

"ſuch I was now convinced it was)
"'till I could receive an anſwer. I knew
"not a perſon in Town, but what I had
"ſeen with the vile Sir William, and
"the ladies of the family. I thought if I
"could find the perſon I named to you,
"he could perhaps recommend me to
"ſome ſafe retirement, 'till I could hear
"from my mother; however I could
"not change my preſent abode for a
"worſe, ſo reſolved to ſlip out in the
"morning and return no more."

"To accompliſh this determination,
"I thought it neceſſary to conceal my
"diſordered mind, and the dejection of
"my ſpirits. I attempted not to ſeek
"repoſe.—My baſe betrayer had mur-
"dered ſleep.—But I changed my dreſs,
"made every effort to ſmooth my trou-
"bled countenance, and rung for my
"maid at my uſual time;—ordered my

"break-

" breakfaſt, and whilſt I was taking it " aſked her a careleſs queſtion or two " about the ſtay of the company the " preceding evening, ſaying, they " ſeemed very cheerful, but I was con- " ſtrained to leave them by a ſudden " pain about my heart."

" Indeed, Madam, it's no wonder " you have a pain at your heart, as my " maſter comes ſo ſeldom;—and I have " often thought I never ſaw ſo happy a " couple, nor a gentleman ſo fond of " his lady, as he uſed to be of you."— " O, as to that, Mary, I am quite ſa- " tisfied. Mr. Guildford muſt mind " his other affairs. I have no doubts " reſpecting his behaviour to me." " I " am glad of it, Madam, (replied the " girl,) for I was afraid you were un- " eaſy about him." She took the break-

" faſt

"faſt away, and I ſtayed in my room
"'till the time I uſually went out."

"Juſt at the ſtreet door I met Mrs.
"Crumpton. "Good morning to you,
"Mrs. Guildford, why you left us rather
"abruptly laſt night." "I was conſtrained
"to it, Madam, I was not very well,
"and had no notion of ſtaying in com-
"pany to damp the cheerfulneſs of
"others by my gravity." "That was
"polite, and like Mrs. Guildford, but
"where are you going this morning,
"Madam?" I replied, "to Church."—
"Well, you are ſuch a pious lady! but
"don't you think you had better ſtay at
"home this morning, and take an air-
"ing in the afternoon?"

"I ſaid I was not very well, and I
"always found myſelf better after going
"to Church.—Well, ſhe ſaid, to be
"ſure,

"ſure, every one in their way; and "looking at my watch, added, "I ſup- "poſe, Madam, you could ſay your "good things as well without thoſe "trinkets by your ſide." "Undoubtedly "Madam, I only wear thoſe trinkets, "as you are pleaſed to call them, be- "cauſe I have been accuſtomed to look "upon them as a part of my dreſs." "Well then, (ſaid ſhe,) as it is now ſome "time ſince I was paid for your lodging "and board, I ſhould be glad, when "you go out, if you would pleaſe to "leave thoſe unneceſſary ornaments at "home,—as honeſt people muſt look to "their own, as the ſaying is." And the "wretch was actually going to lay hold "of my watch."

"I ſtopped her hand, and taking it "off myſelf, called my maid, "here, "Mary, (ſaid I,) put my watch into my "dreſſing

"dreſſing box; Mrs. Crumpton pru-
"dently adviſes me, as I go out alone,
"not to wear it. I believe ſhe's quite
"right, for it does not ſignify, and I
"might loſe it. A good morning to
"you, Mrs. Crumpton:" and away I
"went with my beſt haſte, leaſt ſome
"other thought ſhould come into her
"mind, and ſhe ſhould order me to
"be fetched back again.

"I went to Church, but ſo terrified,
"and my mind in ſuch a perturbed
"ſtate, that, with concern I acknow-
"ledge, I could not attend to the ſolemn
"office. — My eye was continually
"watching the doors, leaſt any of Mrs.
"Crumpton's delegates ſhould be ſent
"to intercept me.—When ſervice was
"over I hurried out at the moſt private
"door, and as ſoon as I got to a ſtand
"of coaches, took one to the Strand;

"there

"there I was ſet down, and going into "a ſhop enquired my way hither. "Here I came, Madam, and you know "the reſt."

Whilſt the afflicted ſtranger related her ſimple but affecting narrative, Miſs Forreſter's mind was in a ſtate of agitation, little inferior to her own. It was with great difficulty ſhe forbore to interrupt her in many places,—and ardently did ſhe offer up her mental thanks to that gracious providence, who by directing the fair ſufferer to her door, had hindered her from becoming a prey to the vile Wilkinſon.

After conſoling her in the tendereſt manner, Miſs Forreſter prevailed on her to ſit down to dinner, and ordering her ſervant to withdraw, told her of Sir William's addreſſes to herſelf, and that every

every thing between them was in a train of being ſhortly ſettled; and that ſhe ſhould always think it a particular happineſs, that by this incident, ſhe had come to a thorough knowledge of his depravity, and been prevented from having her fortune united with ſuch a monſter.—Then addreſſing herſelf to the afflicted lady, ſhe ſaid, "as I am ſo "great a gainer by this accidental in-"terview, you muſt permit me, Madam, "to inſiſt on the pleaſure of your com-"pany while you write to your mother, "and 'till you receive her anſwer;—and "I can aſſure you of the protection and "aſſiſtance of a gentleman, who knows "the world, to tranſact any affairs with "Wilkinſon. If he is not quite dead "to every feeling of humanity, he "may be brought to acknowledge you; "and atone by his future behaviour,

"for what he has made you ſuffer by "the paſt."

Miſs Wilmot, with tears of gratitude accepted the offered aſſylum; but as to any further correſpondence with Sir William, ſhe entirely declined it. He had been the idol of her heart,—all her future proſpects of happineſs had been centered in contributing to his felicity: but then ſhe thought him a man of honour and virtue. She now was fatally convinced of her error; and would never unite her hopes of happineſs, both temporal and eternal, with a man void of ſentiment and principle.

She did not doubt her mother's forgiveneſs of the firſt offence ſhe had been guilty of,—and as ſhe had no crime to charge herſelf with, but that breach of

duty

duty,—when ſhe was ſo happy to receive her pardon, ſhe would return, like the prodigal ſon, and endeavour to ſooth, by redoubled attentions, the declining years of a valuable parent; and ſet up her misfortunes as a beacon to warn the unwary of her own ſex againſt the ſeductive arts of thoſe who lay in wait to enſnare them.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXVI.

A DETECTION.

MISS Forreſter could not but approve of her determination.—"But one piece of juſtice you owe yourſelf, Madam, (ſaid ſhe,) you muſt have many valuable articles of dreſs, at this vile houſe, which ought to be demanded. I will engage Mr. Waldron to get them delivered. That wretch, (I can't bear to name him,) took the lodgings, and he muſt pay for them; every thing you have left there

"there ought to be fetched away imme-
"diately."—"No, Madam, (replied
"Miſs Wilmot,) I will have nothing
"from thence unleſs my watch. I
"ſhould be glad if I could get that. It
"was left me by an aunt, and there are
"ſome valuable family trinkets annexed
"to it.—I would not have any thing
"elſe.—I brought nothing with me
"but the cloaths I had on, nor would I
"on any account take any thing away
"that might be thought the property
"of my unhappy betrayer.—Unhappy,
"I call him, becauſe, whenever misfor-
"tunes or ſickneſs overtake him, he
"has no ſource of comfort from within."

"I approve and admire your reſolu-
"tion, Madam, (ſaid Miſs Forreſter,)
"and, if you pleaſe, I will ſend imme-
"diately for Mr. Waldron, and make
"him acquainted with the whole affair

" for my own ſake as well as your's; as " I would not wiſh to ſee Sir William " again, and I have of late permitted his " viſits without ceremony." Miſs Wilmot agreed, and a card was ſent to Mr. Waldron, to requeſt his company immediately, on buſineſs of importance.

Soon after the meſſage was gone Sir William Wilkinſon ſent up his name. The ladies ſeemed equally agitated. Miſs Forreſter ſaid, ſhe could not ſee him, and told the ſervant ſhe was out. Miſs Wilmot entreated her to be at home, and ſaid it might give him ſuſpicion, if he was ſo ſuddenly treated with reſerve, and put him upon ſome ſcheme to vindicate his conduct that might prove fatal to her; tho' ſhe knew not by what means, but it was a thought that ſtruck her with terror.

This

This requeſt, and the reaſon given for it, raiſed ſome doubts in the mind of Miſs Forreſter, whether Miſs Wilmot's tale was real or fictitious; and ſhe ſaid with ſome quickneſs, "could you like to "ſee him, Madam?" She replied, not if ſhe could well avoid it:—but, if it was deemed neceſſary, under her patronage ſhe would ſupport it as well as ſhe could. She hoped the integrity of her heart would ſupport her in every trial. "Step into this cloſet then, "(ſaid Miſs Forreſter,) I will place "my chair juſt at the door, and you "ſhall hear all that paſſes."—She did ſo, and Miſs Forreſter gave orders for Sir William's admittance.

She received him with a kind of haughtineſs, which made little impreſſion on a man who was only courting her fortune; but would have annihilated

a real lover.—After a little formal indifferent chat,—"pray, Sir Wililiam, "(ſaid Miſs Forreſter,) have not you a "ſeat in Devonſhire?—You never "mentioned it, when you told me "where your eſtates lay;—but I have "juſt heard mention made of you from "a friend in that county, and I have "ſome acquaintance near Wiloughby-"Caſtle, that I long to ſee." "No, "Madam, I have not a foot of land in "that county."

"Well, Sir, but you have connex-"ions there. Have not you viſited at "Sir Wiloughby Greville's?"—"Why, "why, yes, Madam, I think I was "at Sir Wiloughby's once or twice; "but I have no eſtate there." "Well, "Sir, I hoped you had, but that does "not ſignify;—where you have vi-"ſited as a bachelor, I hope you will

"not

"not be unwelcome as a married man:
"—But whether I am married or sin-
"gle I must have a jaunt into Devon-
"shire the ensuing summer. Pray,
"Sir William, did you chance to know
"the widow and daughters of the late
"Major Wilmot? I know they live in
"the neighbourhood of Sir Wiloughby."
"Who, I, Madam? no, I assure you.—
"I, I, had no acquaintance at all in
"those parts;—just a casual visit, but I
"made no stay."

"You never went to Church, I sup-
"pose, Sir William?"—"To Church,
"O yes, Madam; I hope you don't
"think me an Infidel." "Why then,
"if you went to Church, I am sure you
"must have observed Miss Anna Wil-
"mot; she's my particular friend, and
"the sweetest girl in the universe."—
His countenance fell, his colour changed,

and his voice faltered.—"No, 'pon "honour, Madam, I never obſerved or "heard any thing of her.—But, my "dear Miſs Forreſter, what is Mr. "Waldron doing?—He protracts my "happineſs in a very unaccountable "manner." "Why, I have juſt ſent "for him this afternoon, Sir William, "and I think I hear him below. I'll "ſtep and ſee."

Mr. Waldron entered the houſe as Miſs Forreſter deſcended the ſtairs. She in a few words told him enough of Miſs Wilmot's affairs to enable him to ſpeak of it with propriety; and on her naming Sir Wiloughby Greville as a neighbour of the Lady's, and an acquaintance of Sir William's, he ſaid, "that's for- "tunate, indeed; for I know Sir "Wiloughby, and met him this very "morning. I'll ſtrike ſomething out of "this,

"this, that ſhall diſconcert him en-
"tirely, if there is any truth in what
"you have heard." "I have not a
"doubt, Sir, of the truth;—and have
"the lady in an adjoining apartment,
"ready to confront him if neceſſary."

They now entered the dining-room, and Sir William was rejoiced at the appearance of a third perſon, whoſe preſence he hoped would give a new turn to the converſation. After the firſt ſalutations, Sir William began in a ſtrain of extatic impatience, to hope Mr. Waldron had ſettled the neceſſary preliminaries to his happineſs. "Why,
"as to that, Sir William, we muſt take
"time to inveſtigate matters. There
"are ſome miſtakes amongſt us at pre-
"ſent. I underſtand I am to give you
"joy inſtead of making preparations for
"your nuptials."—"That is a ſtrange
"miſtake,

" miſtake, indeed, Sir. I am too proud
" of the hoped for honour, to think of
" making a private affair of it."

" Well, Sir William, I love to ſpeak
" plainly and come to the point at once.
" You know Sir Wiloughby Greville. I
" had the pleaſure of ſeeing him this
" morning;—he's newly arrived in
" Town, and ſaid, he longed to ſee
" Benedict, the married man.—I aſked
" his meaning, and he told me, that a
" ſervant of his was in Town, about
" three months ago,—and, in paſſing
" by an elegant houſe, ſaw you and a
" very handſome lady ſtep into a cha-
" riot;—that he aſked one of the foot-
" men that attended you, if his maſter
" was married?—He anſwered in the
" affirmative;—but ſaid, he believed it
" was a ſecret at preſent.

" Now,

"Now, Sir Wiloughby tells me, "when he heard this, it ſtruck a light "upon an affair that had appeared very "myſterious:—For on the very day "that you left your hunting ſeat in that "neighbourhood, (which was ſooner "than your friends thought of parting "with you,) a young lady of good fa- "mily, and genteel, tho' not affluent "expectances, diſappeared, and not- "withſtanding every effort of her almoſt "diſtracted mother, no information "could be obtained. Sir Wiloughby, "from his ſervant's deſcription of the "lady he ſaw with you, has no doubt "but he ſhall find in the perſon of Lady "Wilkinſon, his late amiable, and "much reſpected neighbour, Miſs Anna "Wilmot. Now, Sir William, what "reply can you make to this?

During

During this ſhort narrative, the Knight's countenance went thro' ſuch a revolution of agitations as cannot be deſcribed. He repeatedly endeavoured to interrupt him, but could not articulate a word, and Miſs Forreſter's expreſſive features, played as many variations as her fingers would have found in the fineſt concerto of her favourite Felton. But there was this difference, Sir William's feelings were thoſe of diſappointed villainy, and the mortification of being detected;—Miſs Forreſter's were the effuſions of joy, at her happy eſcape from the machinations of ſuch an adept in art and ſeduction; and the exultations of a lively imagination, at the ridiculous figure a man of intrigue makes, when expoſed by a perſon of virtue and honour.

Recollecting himſelf as well as he could, Sir William began to heſitate an anſwer;—aſſured Mr. Waldron, it all originated in ignorance and miſtake, he would not ſay malevolence;—he hoped he had not an enemy that durſt impeach his character.—"I hope it will be found "ſo, Sir William; but as a friend of "Miſs Forreſter's, whom ſhe is pleaſed "to honour with her confidence, you "muſt permit me to be fully ſatisfied "before I can proceed in what ſo nearly "concerns her future happineſs." "I "thank you for your care and attach-"ment, Mr. Waldron, (ſaid Miſs For-"reſter,) and I think we can ſoon ſet "all theſe myſterious matters right. "I have a perſon in the houſe, Sir "William, that can clear theſe ſtrange "appearances up to the ſatisfaction of all "parties." Sir William thanked her for her

her goodneſs, and ſeemed reanimated. Mr. Waldron looked at her with an enquiring eye. She returned him a glance of mirthful myſtery, and ſlipped into the cloſet.

She found Miſs Wilmot in much better ſpirits than ſhe expected. She had attended to the converſation,—it had ſtrengthened her mind,—and ſhe ſeemed to riſe almoſt above mortality. "Will "it be too great a mortification, my "dear Miſs Wilmot, to annihilate this "wretch by your preſence? I am ſorry "to aſk ſuch a favour; but, if you could "comply, I think, it would cut the "matter ſhort, and we ſhould have no "further trouble with him." "I thank "you for your tenderneſs, Madam, (re-"plied Miſs Wilmot,) I dreaded the "thoughts of an interview when I en-

"tered

"tered the cloſet, but now I deſire it.—
"Lead me, Madam, to the trying ſcene;
"and, I hope, I ſhall acquit myſelf as
"becomes the daughter of Major
"Wilmot."

She took Miſs Forreſter's arm, and with a dignity and fortitude that defied deſcription, went into the dining-room. Mr. Waldron roſe and bowed by an involuntary inſtinct.—Sir William roſe,—trembled,—attempted to withdraw,—but was conſtrained to reſt his hand upon the ſopha.—Miſs Wilmot advanced with a modeſt firmneſs.—She courteſey'd to Mr. Waldron, and approaching Sir William, ſhe ſaid, "pardon me, Sir,
"for appearing in your preſence un-
"bidden, after having once, in the moſt
"ſolemn manner, and in the moſt ſo-
"lemn place, vowed obedience, love,
"and

" and honour; but as you have thought
" fit to renounce the obligations you
" there entered into, to caſt me off as a
" vile creature, and put me into the
" power of the vileſt wretches upon
" earth, I muſt eſteem all obligations
" cancelled."

" Heaven is my witneſs how dear you
" were once to my heart!—but I would
" not unite my ſoul in the bonds of
" amity, to ſo unworthy, ſo contami-
" nated a being as I now find you, were
" you emperor of the univerſe. Secure in
" the integrity of my own intentions, I
" can, without confuſion, truſt my cauſe
" to the judgment of a candid public. I
" have friends that would vindicate the
" honour you have ſported with,—but
" I will not ſuffer it;—be your crimes
" your puniſhment.—I fear, I am not

" the

"the firſt victim to your baſeneſs; but "my misfortunes ſhall be made public, "and I hope I ſhall be the laſt. Now, "Sir, can you ſay any thing in extenu "ation, or endeavour to impoſe further "on this gentleman and lady?"

He ſtood like an inanimate being, appalled and trembling.—Miſs Forreſter approached him, and with an air of contemptuous levity, ſaid, "You ſee, Sir "William, I have made my promiſe "good. We are all fully ſatisfied, and "the ſooner you withdraw the better; "but your good friend, Mrs. Crumpton, "would do well to ſend Miſs Wilmot's "watch to my lodgings, or ſhe may be "called upon in a manner neither ſhe "nor you would be much pleaſed with."

He attempted to ſay ſome of thoſe unintelligible nothings, that are meant

to

to ſtand for ſomething; but was ſo over awed by the dignity of conſcious virtue in Miſs Wilmot, and the ſarcaſtic vivacity of Miſs Forreſter, that, pale, trembling, and muttering broken maledictions againſt his own folly, he departed.

About an hour after he had left them, a coach arrived with trunks containing every thing Miſs Wilmot had left at her lodgings, with the keys ſealed up in a blank paper. She opened that which ſhe thought likely to contain her watch; found it, took it out, ſealed up the keys again, and returned the effects to Mrs. Crumpton.

Miſs Wilmot ſent the letter ſhe had written to her mother, and Mr. Waldron wrote one that corroborated what ſhe had written. She ſoon received a kind invitation

vitation to return, and left Miſs Forreſter with every grateful acknowledgement:—was affectionately received by her relatives and acquaintance, and ſpent much of her time in warning the younger part of her ſex to give ear to no profeſſions of love but what were made openly, and with the approbation of their parents or guardians; as the only way to ſhun the rock ſhe had ſtruck upon.

The mortifying manner in which Sir William's diſappointment in regard to Miſs Forreſter had been brought about, ſoon took air, and he was ſo laughed at in all companies, that he was glad to leave Town in the height of the ſeaſon, and bury himſelf in the Country;—where, being detected in an illicit intercourſe with a farmer's daughter in his neigh-

neighbourhood, he was met one evening by her brother, and ſo heartily beaten, that his bruiſes threw him into a fever, of which he languiſhed ſome weeks, and then went to anſwer for his enormities at that awful bar, from whence there is no appeal.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXVII.

A TRIUMPH.

WE now leave Miſs Forreſter perfectly ſatisfied with her behaviour in the late affair, as, indeed, ſhe well might; and going on in her accuſtomed round of pleaſure, without the leaſt regret for any of her departed lovers.

Soon after Mr. Egerton's laſt interview with Miſs Forreſter, he returned to the Park. His account of her behaviour gave real concern to his mother and ſiſters, and her ceaſing to correſpond with them

them encreaſed their anxiety on her account; for tho' they were much diſpleaſed at her behaviour, yet they retained a kindneſs for her, and had her welfare ſincerely at heart.

Mrs. Egerton recollected many inſtances of extreme vanity, and an impatience of controul in her diſpoſition, from early childhood;—but Mrs. Forreſter's prudent management had kept her from expoſing theſe diſpoſitions, and her amiable qualities only had appeared to the public view, 'till ſhe had the misfortune to loſe that valuable parent, and to be rendered independent. Had her fortune been ſmall, Mrs. Egerton and Mrs. Hamilton were both well qualified and well diſpoſed to have guided her youthful ſteps in the paths of prudence;—but circumſtanced as ſhe was, they could only wiſh her well, and look upon

upon her errors with a favourable and pitying eye.

Mr. Egerton, after his return, prevailed on his mother and ſiſters to ſpend a few months in town. The young ladies wanted little ſolicitation to vary the ſcene, tho' they were far from being fond of diſſipation;—yet, as many of their friends would be there, conſequently their aſſemblies and viſiting days would be thin of company, and the beauties of nature being veil'd in the hoary robe of winter, had loſt all their attractions.

Mrs. Egerton who placed all her happineſs in that of her children, made no difficulty of giving her conſent, and they were only deliberating whether to go immediately, (about the middle of Novem[illegible]) or ſtay and ſpend the

Chriſtmas holidays in their accuſtomed hoſpitable way at the Park; when a letter from Mrs. Rainsford to Miſs Egerton determined them to loſe no time in their preparations. She told her amiable friend, that Lord Belmour and Lady Almeria had prevailed with Captain Rainsford and herſelf to accompany them to Town; that they ſhould ſet out in a few days, and it was the joint requeſt of Lady Belmour, Lady Almeria, and herſelf, that they might have the happineſs of meeting the family from Egerton-Park, which would give life and joy to their parties, and was the wiſh neareſt all their hearts.

Miſs Egerton, by her mother's deſire, returned an anſwer fraught with acknowledgements for a propoſal ſo polite and agreeable,—told her their intentions of an excurſion to town, but that they were

were deliberating on the time of their departure, which her obliging letter had decided; and that they ſhould endeavour to be in London in about nine days.

Mr. Egerton ſet out the next morning, that he might have time to provide a houſe, or at leaſt a ſet of commodious apartments, againſt the arrival of his mother and ſiſters; and they followed as ſoon as they had put their affairs at the Park in a proper arrangement, and made the neceſſary preparations for their journey.

The day after Mr. Egerton's arrival in Town, he went to Lord Belmour's houſe, in St. James's-Square, which he found fitting up for the reception of the family; but could receive no poſitive information when they would be there. He left a card with his addreſs, which the foot-

man promiſed to deliver as ſoon as his Lord arrived.—Mr. Egerton had the good fortune to find an elegant ready furniſhed houſe to be let, which he engaged and got ready for the reception of his mother and ſiſters, who reached town at the time they had propoſed.

One of the firſt mornings after they were ſettled, Mrs. Egerton mentioned calling upon Miſs Forreſter.—Mr. Egerton thought his mother's condeſcenſion too great. As Miſs Forreſter had behaved, he thought it would be as much as ſhe could expect, to be informed by a card, they were in Town. "I ac-
"knowledge, my dear, (ſaid the good
"lady,) it is as much as ſhe could ex-
"pect,—perhaps, more than ſhe would
"deſire;—but let us do more than the
"rules of politeneſs dictate, or than the
"claims of friendſhip (violated as it has
"been

"been by the vain Louiſa,) can de-
"mand. It is worth one effort to en-
"deavour to recal my pupil, the darling
"child of my deceaſed friend, to pro-
"priety of conduct, and a true ſenſe of
"her own dignity, which ſhe ſeems at
"preſent to have loſt. But as her beha-
"viour to you and Julia has been ſuch
"as muſt make her almoſt die with con-
"fuſion to behold you, Matilda and I
"will call upon her; and if ſhe makes
"any decent conceſſions, I dare ſay, I
"may aſſure her, you have both forgot
"all *ſhe* would not wiſh to have remem-
"bered." "You have full power to
"anſwer for me as you think proper,
"Madam, and I am ſure my ſiſter will
"not let any body outſtrip her in gene-
"roſity."

With theſe aſſurances Mrs. Egerton and Matilda went to St. James's-Street

the next morning. They found Miſs Forreſter in her dreſſing-room, with the two Miſs Waldrons, and thrown into ſuch varied emotions of ſurpriſe, confuſion, and pleaſure, at their names being ſent up, that ſhe received them with ſuch an evident flutter of ſpirits, as made them forget all that was paſt, and attend only to the agreeable ſenſations of the preſent moment. To the firſt ſalutation, a number of enquiries and informations ſucceeded, and Mrs. Egerton at her departure, hoped to ſee Miſs Forreſter at her houſe in a friendly way, and ſhould be happy if the ladies preſent or any other of her friends would accompany her; as nothing would give her more pleaſure, than to teſtify her regard for Miſs Forreſter, and to cultivate an acquaintance with her friends.

Louiſa

Louiſa made every polite acknowledgement for this truly friendly viſit,—promiſed ſoon to pay her reſpects in Lower-Brook-Street,—and deſired every reſpectful remembrance to Mr. and Miſs Egerton, whom ſhe expreſſed great impatience to ſee. Louiſa was indeed highly gratified by this viſit, as the friendſhip and reſpect ſhewn her by a lady of Mrs. Egerton's years and eſtabliſhed character, could not but raiſe her conſequence amongſt her other acquaintance; and ſhe determined in her own mind to behave in ſuch a manner to Mr. Egerton and Julia, as ſhould effectually blot out all remembrance of her former unfriendly improprieties. She ſoon returned the obliging viſit,—introduced the Miſs Waldrons as her particular friends,—and ſupported her good reſolutions with much decency.

During a fortnight's reſidence in Town great was the ſurpriſe and diſappointment of the Egerton family, that they could gain no intelligence of Lord Belmour, and the deſirable party that were to accompany him. Enquiries had been repeatedly made, the ſervants could give no reaſon for the delay, as they had received no freſh orders, and held themſelves in daily expectation of the ſuperiors whom they loved and honoured.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

AN OCCURRENCE TOO COMMON IN HUMBLE LIFE.

THE delay was occaſioned by the following accident.—The family ſat out at the time they had propoſed, Lady Belmour, Lady Almeria, Mrs. Rainsford, and Lady Belmour's waiting-woman in the coach,—Lord Belmour and Captain Rainsford, with a ſuit of ſervants, on horſeback.

The firſt day of their journey, as it was growing duſk, and they were within

half a mile of the Inn where they intended to paſs the night, and had ſent a ſervant forward to give orders for a ſupper, and rooms to be prepared, on the declivity of a hill, they perceived a waggon approaching, whoſe inſolent driver ſeemed inclined to diſpute the road, and inſult them.

Lady Belmour, ever inclined to peace and gentleneſs, ordered the coachman to yield the road. He immediately attempted to obey her commands, but the way was rough and required care; and before he could clear it, the wretch, inſtigated by wanton cruelty, drove with all the ſpeed he could, and locked the fore wheel of his waggon within the fore wheel of the coach. The coachman ſtopped,—the ladies ſcreamed,—the ſervants threatened,—the brute whipped his horſes, and cry'd, "Ware, "whirligig!"

"whirligig!" The ſervants diſmounted and ſeized the horſes,—but not before a violent exertion had broke the fore axletree of the coach, and thrown it againſt a bank, which providentially prevented its being quite overturned.

At this inſtant Lord Belmour and Captain Rainsford came up.—They had been detained by a ſcene of diſtreſs which operated ſo ſtrongly on their feelings that they could not purſue their journey 'till they had enquired into the cauſe, and adminiſtered relief.—At a ſmall neat houſe, that ſtood at the diſtance of a little field from the road, they ſaw ſeveral rough, ill-looking men,—one was puſhing a decent woman (with a young child in her arms, and two little one's hanging on her cloaths and weeping) out of the houſe; two more were forcibly endeavouring to pull a robuſt, good-

good-looking man, about thirty, away from her,—whoſe ſtrong features ſeemed to be agitated by deſpair and deſperation.

Juſt as they ſtopped, they heard the woman exclaim, "Oh, Sir! ſhew us a "little mercy, as you ſhall hope to re- "ceive it in your greateſt need!—allow "us but a little time, and we will pay "you all!—We have had misfortunes, "but we will endeavour to retrieve them "by redoubled induſtry." Tears ſtopped her voice. The man, with a look of inconceivable anguiſh, made a ſtrong effort to diſengage himſelf, and in broken accents, ſaid, "by heaven you ſhall not "part us!—I will protect and ſupport "my wife and babes.—Is this law?— "is this the humanity of the great and "rich?—that if it pleaſes providence to "viſit a poor man with loſſes, he muſt

"ſtarve

"ſtarve in a jail, and his helpleſs inno-
"cents muſt beg a ſcanty pittance; per-
"haps die for want, unhouſed, un-
"friended.—Oh! it is too much,—my
"brain turns!"—and he threw himſelf with vehemence on the earth.

Lord Belmour was much agitated:
"Come, Captain, (ſaid he,) let us haſte
"to ſee what diſtreſs has overtaken this
"miſerable couple. I have ſome little
"farms in this neighbourhood, and I
"ſtrongly ſuſpect this is one of my te-
"nants;—if it is, their oppreſſor ſhall
"give a ſevere account for this day's
"proceeding."

They rode up to the door, and found it as they had ſuppoſed.—A bad harveſt and ſome illneſs in the family had rendered them unable to pay the rent at the appointed day, and the inhuman ſteward had

had ſeized on the ſtock; and thinking it ſcarcely ſufficient to anſwer his demands, had ordered the worthy man to be hurried to priſon, and the poor afflicted wife and her helpleſs infants turned out of doors.

At this diſtreſsful criſis Lord Belmour arrived, as a delegate from heaven, to pour balm into the bleeding boſom of agonizing grief. He enquired the cauſe of this ſcene of woe. He received a very ſhort anſwer from one of the bailiffs; (for ſuch it ſeemed they were.) He aſked who was their Landlord, and was told, Lord Belmour. He aſked the man if he had applied to his Lordſhip for a little longer time. He ſaid, he had not, he had thought to have done ſo, but the ſteward had aſſured him, that he was ſeized on by his Lord's particular orders.

"Well,

"Well, (ſaid his Lordſhip,) your "caſe ſeems very hard, friend,—Pray "how much do you owe?" "Fifty "pounds, Sir,—and I could have paid "it, notwithſtanding my late miſ-"fortunes, but I lately lent double that "ſum to a brother that was in unhappy "circumſtances, and it is not yet in his "power to return it." "Well, (ſaid his "Lordſhip,) you ſhall have a chance "to recover yourſelf;" and taking out his pocket-book gave him a bank note for ſixty pounds.—The late diſtreſſed pair thanked him on their knees, and begged to know his name, and that he would be pleaſed to take a bond for the payment; both which he declined, ſaying, "it is "ſufficient, friend, that I know *your* "name. When I come this way again, "I'll call and talk the matter over with "you, when you have more ſpirits, and "I have more time." So ſaying, he and the

the Captain gallopped off to join their company, and found the ladies in the painful ſituation before deſcribed. They were too anxious for the ſafety of their fair friends to make any enquiry how the accident had happened; and the inhuman author of the misfortune, ſeeing ſo large a party of opponents, pretended his horſes were reſtive and had taken fright.

When the ladies were releaſed from their terrifying confinement, they at firſt declared themſelves unhurt. The gentlemen alighted and ſent a ſervant to take their horſes to the village and get aſſiſtance to bring the coach thither.—Lord Belmour ſupported his mother, the Captain his wife, and Lady Almeria, refuſing his other arm, took hold of the waiting maid; and they walked towards the

the village, rejoiced that they had ſuffered only from their fears.

When they were arrived at the Inn, and comfortably ſeated, Lady Belmour ſaid, ſhe muſt now begin with her complaints. She found ſhe had not eſcaped quite unhurt. She felt a good deal of pain in one arm and ſhoulder, and ſhould like to retire immediately;—as, perhaps, going into a warm bed, and having a little ſpirits applied to the bruiſed parts, might prevent any further diſagreeable conſequence.

The reſt of the company ſpent a comfortable evening, and hoped to purſue their journey by the next afternoon. The morning was ſpent in getting the coach put in a travelling condition, but Lady Belmour's bruiſes proved much worſe than ſhe had apprehended; and,

joined

joined to a fatiguing walk in the night air, brought on a fever, which made it impoſſible for her to proceed.

As ſhe hoped a few days would enable her to follow them, ſhe would have had only her maid ſtay with her; but her ſon and daughter were too affectionate to leave her during her indiſpoſition.—And as Mr. and Mrs. Rainsford inſiſted on ſtaying with them, they made an agreeable family, and contributed, by every tender aſſiduity, to the comfort and amuſement of the ſick Lady.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXIX.

A REBUFF.

IN a few days ſhe was able to ſit up moſt of the day, tho' not to leave her room. The gentlemen rode out moſt mornings and made themſelves acquainted with the names and characters of all the families of conſequence for many miles round.

It is not to be doubted but one of their firſt excurſions was to the Moat-houſe, where they had extricated the honeſt

honeſt Mr. Waters and his family, from the overwhelming waves of diſtreſs that ſurrounded them. Lord Belmour enquired into the character and ſituation of Waters, from ſeveral of his neighbours. His conſtant information was, that he had had an education above his preſent ſituation in life,—was a truly worthy man,—and had been hardly, nay cruelly, dealt with.

On his arrival at the Moat-houſe, he found every thing clean, neat, and frugal.—The now happy couple received him with a reſpect little ſhort of adoration. The little ones were told to thank that gentleman that they had now a houſe to ſhelter them from the inclement ſkies. They hung about his knees, kiſſed his hands, and penetrated his heart with the luxurious ſenſibilities of exalted benificence. He made himſelf maſter

maſter of all the particulars relative to their misfortunes and the late ſeizure; and the more he converſed with Mr. and Mrs. Waters, the more he was pleaſed with their good ſenſe and liberal ſentiments.

When he took his leave, he ſaid, "fear nothing, my good friends, happier days are at hand. I ſhall ſee you again ſoon, and then you ſhall know my name."—In the evening he entertained his mother with an account of the adventure, which gave her much pleaſure. She ſaid ſhe could ſay nothing particular in behalf of the preſent ſteward's character;—that, as he knew, honeſt Longfield, (whom his father always highly approved,) died whilſt he was abroad, ſhe had appointed this Martin, who had been clerk with him, and knew every thing relative to the eſtate, to ſucceed

ceed him 'till his Lordſhip's return; and if he found he made an ill uſe of the truſt repoſed in him, the ſooner he was diſplaced the better.

Early the next morning Lord Belmour and the Captain ſet out for Mr. Martin's. They found the houſe and ſervants in a ſtate of confuſion,—the maſter and miſtreſs not riſen,—and tho' near ten o'clock not a room fit to ſit down in.—His Lordſhip ordered the ſervants to let their maſter know he ſhould be glad to ſpeak with him, and he and his friend would take a walk in the garden, where he ſhould be glad if he would attend them. Here they found every thing in the moſt exact order, and in the higheſt ſtate of cultivation, and the hot houſe, orangery, and ſhrubbery, might well have challenged thoſe at Belmour-Lodge.

Mr.

Mr. Martin ſoon appeared, and made many apologies for having overſlept himſelf, and hoped his Lordſhip would do him the honour to take an humble breakfaſt with him. "No angling for "compliments, Mr. Martin, (replied "his Lordſhip,) I ſee nothing that "bears the aſpect of humility, under "your roof, or near it;—but I am now "upon buſineſs and conſequently am "in haſte. We have met with an ac-"cident on the road, which will detain "us, I fear, for ſome time; and I ſhall "be ſhort of caſh ere I reach Town, and "came to ſee if you had received any "thing ſince you laſt ſettled with my "mother?"

Martin replied, with great perturbation, that he had not a ſhilling of his Lordſhip's in his hands. "I ſhould have "received ſeveral little ſums lately, my "Lord,

" Lord, but theſe villainous farmers are
" quite too crafty for a plain honeſt man
" like me. Pleaſe your Lordſhip, I
" have too much of the milk of human
" kindneſs in my diſpoſition to be able
" to deal with them. They tell me a
" piteous tale and my heart melts, and I
" cannot proceed as I ought. There's
" one Waters, of the Moat-houſe, a te-
" nant of your Lordſhip's, that owes
" two years rent, and he promiſes ſo
" fair, and intercedes ſo for the ſake of
" his wife and children, that tho' I blame
" myſelf for not doing juſtice to your
" Lordſhip, I cannot bring my mind to
" the taſk of encountering the clamour
" that this family will raiſe about me;
" and yet, I know that my forbearance
" with them, encourages their neigh-
" bours to keep behind hand."

" And

"And pray, Mr. Martin, is this "Waters really two years behind hand?" "I aſk your Lordſhip's pardon,—I hope "you don't call my veracity in queſtion; "but if my humanity is diſguſting to "your Lordſhip, why I muſt beg leave "to reſign." "Your reſignation is ac- "cepted, Mr. Martin, (replied his "Lordſhip,) and your accounts ſhall "be inſpected with a ſeverity, which, I "fear, they are ill prepared for. I have "copies of Waters's laſt receipts in my "pocket, and I was an eye witneſs to the "diſtreſs, your *milky nature* impoſed on "a worthy, induſtrious family; and this "very man, whom you have ſo recently "oppreſſed, under the pretext of my "particular orders, and have now ſo "vilely traduced, as being two years in "my debt, I appoint to ſucceed you. "He and my agent from London, Mr. "Worthland, ſhall be with you on

"Thurſday morning. Their reſidence "ſhall be at the Lodge. The buſineſs I "chooſe to have tranſacted there; and "very glad I am that Worthland has "duplicates of all your late maſter's ac-"counts and papers in his hands:—And "now to breakfaſt with what appetite "you may." So ſaying, he haſted out of the garden, and the Captain and he mounted their horſes and returned to the Inn, where they then reſided.—They ſtopped at the Moat-houſe in their way, where he told his name to the aſtoniſhed Waters, and gave him an order in writing to demand and examine Martin's accounts, in conjunction with Mr. Worthland,—who, he told him, ſhould be with him by the next evening;—for which purpoſe he ſent off an expreſs that night, and the plan he had laid was duly executed to the utter confuſion of Martin, the great joy of the

tenants,

tenants, and much to the advantage of his Lordſhip, as well as that of the honeſt Mr. Waters.

This affair being ſettled, the party had nothing to do but wait the perfect recovery of Lady Belmour.—It was ſomething more than a fortnight from the day of their ſetting out, before this deſirable event took place, and they then purſued their journey, and arrived in Town without further hindrance or adventure.—As ſoon as they were ſettled and recovered from the little hurries and fatigues of travelling, they began to regret hearing no news of the Egerton family; and as Miſs Egerton had wrote to Mrs. Rainsford before their houſe was engaged, ſhe could not ſend her addreſs. Lord Belmour's ſervants during this long time of expectation and incertitude, had loſt Mr. Egerton's card, and there-

fore thought it beſt to ſay nothing of his having called.

About three or four days after they came to Town, there was a maſquerade at the Hay-Market. Lord Belmour and Captain Rainsford were determined not to loſe the firſt opportunity of judging for themſelves, of a ſpecies of entertainment which they had *ſo* often heard condemned, and *as* often heard applauded as an elegant amuſement, that gave an opportunity to the moſt diffident diſpoſitions, to exert their latent abilities under an inſcrutable diſguiſe. They had no difficulty to encounter in prevailing on Lady Almeria and Mrs. Rainsford to accompany them. The ladies were, perhaps, full as willing as the gentlemen, to form an idea of the entertainment from their own experience.

Con-

Conſidering of dreſſes, and forming a plan for their behaviour, occupied the morning very agreeably. Mrs. Rainſford addreſſing the Captain with a ſmile of inexpreſſible tenderneſs, ſaid, "What "characters can we aſſume, Sir, that "will make it neceſſary for us to keep "together? for, indeed, I ſhould be un-"happy, in a ſtrange place and a large "unknown company, unleſs under the "protection of your ſheltering arm." "Then I'll tell you, my good friends, "(ſaid Lady Almeria,) you ſhall be a "brace of ballad-ſingers. You have a "ſweet voice, Mrs. Rainsford, and ſhall "treat the company with my favourite "ſong, that you made at the Grange, "when your poor heart was in a certain "fluttering fluctuating ſtate, between "faint hopes, groundleſs doubts, and "fooliſh fears;—and the Captain has "an excellent ſea voice, and ſhall ſing

" blow high, blow low, with Banniſter,
" or the beſt of them."

" Agreed, (ſaid the Captain) that's
" the very thing; a lame ſailor ſinging
" ballads with his faithful Sue. I ſhall be
" quite at home. And what will you
" transform yourſelf to, Lady Almeria?
" not a nun, I hope."—" No verily,
" friend, nor a quaker neither.—I ſhould
" not like to aſſume a character that I
" could not ſupport with ſome degree of
" propriety, without doing violence to
" the flippancy of my diſpoſition." " I
" think, ſiſter, you would appear to ad-
" vantage in a Spaniſh habit." " Well,
" Sir, I have no objection to that. A
" Spaniſh lady's veil is an excellent
" thing, as ſhe may be loving or pert, or
" whatever ſhe pleaſes, without being
" obliged to bluſh for any little inde-
" corum ſhe may chooſe to be guilty of."

" But

"But pray what ſhape will your "Lordſhip be pleaſed to appear in?" "I have no choice,—only I ſhould "like the garb of ſimplicity, without "being awkward or diſpleaſing."— "Then, Sir, ſuppoſe you turn gardener. "You can deſcant on horticulture to "admiration; and, no doubt, but there "will be many a fair ſhepherdeſs, ruddy "milk-maid, or blooming noſegay-girl, "that would be proud to be your aſ- "ſociate." "Agreed, my ſiſter, and "now this knotty point's ſettled, we "have nothing to do but ſend for our "dreſſes, and adjuſt ourſelves for the "exhibition."

CHAP. XL.

A MASQUERADE.

WHILST theſe preparations were making in St. James's-Square, Mr. Egerton was occupied in a ſimilar manner,—tho' he could not prevail on his ſiſters to accompany him. Several ladies of their acquaintance had ſolicited their company,—but they declined all invitations, and reſolved to partake of nothing beyond a private aſſembly, or a ſnug party to a play or opera; 'till their friends

friends from Belmour-Lodge accompanied them.

As Mr. Egerton could not perſuade his ſiſters to appear with him, he choſe to go alone and unconnected, that he might return whenever he thought proper. He conſulted his mother and ſiſters about a dreſs.—Miſs Egerton was for ſimplicity, ſhe ſaid, her brother would make an irreſiſtible ſhepherd, and ſhe would dreſs his crook with all the blooming ſweets of Tempe.—Matilda ſaid, "no, we *always* behold our brother "arrayed in native elegance, ſcorning "the light frippery and gaudy deco-"rations of the age:—I wiſh him for this "evening to appear in a new light. I "could like to ſee him arrayed in the "gorgeous trappings of the Eaſt.—Let "a ſnowy turban, glittering with gems, "and overſhadowed with nodding

" plumes, encircle your brow. A good " tawny maſk, adorned with a pair of " graceful whiſkers, conceal your youth- " ful countenance; and a robe of various " coloured ſilks flow from your ſhoul- " ders in many a graceful fold." " Well " ſaid, my dear fanciful Matilda;—Par- " don me, Julia; but I will, this night, " look, and try to move a Sultan, and " then I ſhall be moſt truly diſguiſed." He ſent for his dreſs,—he put it on, and his mother and ſiſters were highly delighted with his appearance.—A chair was ordered, and he went to the Hay-Market, in all the pride of eaſtern magnificence.

The aſſembly was numerous and brilliant, but no characters attracted the general notice more than the ballad-ſinging ſailor and his aſſociate.—Many agreeable ſmartneſſes paſſed between

them.

them and a variety of maſks. The Captain ſupported his profeſſional appearance with infinite humour and propriety; and Mrs. Rainsford had an elegant quickneſs of repartee, that ſoon made the would-be wits afraid of encountering her. At length a ſong was called for, and the ſweet voiced Suſan began a dialogue they had been perfecting themſelves in, from the time their characters were fixed, 'till they ſet out.

SUSAN.

When firſt my William plough'd the main,
Tho' woo'd by many a youthful ſwain,
I ſhun'd their ſports, I fled the plain,
And ſought the gloom-wrapp'd grove.
There ſigh'd away the noon-tide hours,
There dew'd with tears the cloſing flow'rs,
And there, beſought heav'ns pitying pow'rs,
To bleſs my abſent love.

WILLIAM.

WILLIAM.

When rous'd by glory's call, I ſped
To meet Britannia's foes;
Where Elliot fought, or Rodney led,
What fears could interpoſe?
No fears, but leaſt my tender Sue,
Should give to love, what was to honour due.

SUSAN.

To love, at firſt I gave my heart,
'Till, by thy brave example fired,
I bid each ſelfiſh thought depart,
And, by my country's wrongs inſpired,
Wiſhed thou victorious might'ſt return,
Or I ſleep with thee in the peaceful urn.

WILLIAM.

Then kindly receive thy fond lover, dear Sue,
Tho' wounded his limbs, yet his heart's ſound
and true.

SUSAN.

Thy heart ſound and true, is as much as I aſk,
And to aid thy weak limbs, ſhall henceforth
be my taſk.

Glorious

Glorious wounds received before
How my hero I adore!
Fighting in his country's cauſe,
Bleeding to protect her laws!
With Elliot, Rodney, Digby, dear to fame,
May future times entwine my William's name.

The ſong and ſingers met with general applauſe, and Suſan was requeſted by ſeveral gentlemen to favour the company with another ſong, unaccompanied; but ſhe politely declined it, and mixed with the throng.

The elegant gardener drew the attention of the ladies in general. His dreſs was delicately ſimple. He wore a white ſattin waiſtcoat, neatly trimmed with green ribband,—a dark blue velvet apron tucked up on one ſide,—a maſk, freſh and blooming as his natural countenance,—a ſmall round hat,—and his fine hair flowing in careleſs ringlets over his ſhoulders.

ders. On his left arm he carried a neat wicker baſket divided in the middle; one end was filled with choice dried fruits and ſweetmeats, the other with beautiful ſmall noſegays of artificial flowers, perfumed with eſſences of the real ones they repreſented. From theſe blooming ſtores he made offerings in the moſt polite manner, to every maſk worthy of attention; and with ſuch a characteriſtic propriety, as charmed the receivers more than the preſent.

As ſoon as Captain Rainsford and his Lady had finiſhed their ſong, he approached them with an air of animated approbation. "Brave tar, (ſaid he,) accept this ſprig of laurel, I wiſh I had "enough in my baſket to weave you a "crown; may your fame be laſting as "its verdure!—Wear it for the ſake of "one who loves his Country,—and loves

you

" you for having fought to ſupport its
" claims." Then turning to Mrs. Rainſ-
ford, he ſaid, " amiable Suſan, to you
" I preſent myrtle and everlaſting-love.
" Wear them in your boſom, and de-
" pend upon it, the man, who has ſo
" bravely fought for his country, will
" never forſake the object of his af-
" fections."

During this addreſs, he obſerved a ſhepherdeſs, decked with all the flaunting frippery of untutored taſte, looking into his baſket. After a pauſe, ſhe ſaid, " Gentle Sir, have you nothing to be-
" ſtow on a ſimple nymph?"—and ſhe tripped round him, reclining her head with an affected air of languiſhment.—The fictitious gardener looking at her with a ſarcaſtic air, ſaid, " Here, fair
" damſel, is a tulip, ſtreaked with all
" the gaudy dies the hot-bed could pro-
duce.

"duce. I wiſh I could preſent you "with a butterfly hovering over it; but "the next lover you meet with will ſup- "ply its place." She accepted the flower, but turned away confuſed and diſguſted.

He accoſted a beautiful nun, and with an air of delicate politeneſs offered her a ſprig of ice-plant and a lily of the valley. "Receive, fair ſiſter, theſe em- "blems of purity and innocence, to "which you have prudently devoted "yourſelf;—may your mild virtues ſhine "like theſe chriſtaline particles, when "irradiated by the riſing ſun; and your "matin ſong ariſe fragrant as the odours "of this humble flower, when exhaled "by the evening dew. Never may you "regret the wiſe choice you have made; "nor diſgrace that reſpectable habit, by "vanity of heart or lightneſs of man- "ners!"

"ners!" She received the noſegay with a graceful courteſey. "Thanks, gentle "monitor, I will wear your preſent in "my boſom, and treaſure up your good "wiſhes in my heart; and if ever a "thought ſhould ariſe diſſonant to the "reſolution I have this moment formed, "I will recal your idea and admoni-"tions, and, I doubt not, but they "will enable me to behold all the reſt "of your ſex with perfect indifference." She ſighed and precipitately mingled with the company, as if to eſcape from her own thoughts.

An affected figure in a domino ſtepped up to him, and with an air of ſelf-applauſe, exclaimed, "Deuce take me, "friend Adam, thou art very kind to "the ladies; haſt nothing to beſtow on "me?" "Certainly, Sir, reverend fa-"ther I would have called you, had "your

" your demeanour coincided with your " habit,—then I would have preſented " you with *roſemary* and *herb of grace*;— " as it is, here is *coxcomb* and *London-* " *pride* for you." A general laugh enſued, and the mortified domino retired to the fartheſt corner of the room.

Lord Belmour had obſerved his ſiſter in converſation with a Turkiſh maſk.— He approached her with a reſpectful deference,—" Graceful Iberian, conde- " ſcend to accept this humble offering " from my hand; and, if the favour is " not too great give it a place in your " boſom," and, with a low bow, he preſented her a ſweet ſultan, ſurrrounded with heart's-eaſe.—Then, turning to the gentleman, with a ſtill lower reverence, he ſaid, " Imperial Amurath, deign to " receive from the loweſt of thy ſlaves, " this damaſk roſe, breathing the deli-

" cious

" cious odours of thy royal gardens; and " theſe violets, dim, but ſweeter than the " lids of Juno's eyes." They both received the blooming ſweets with a dignified politeneſs, ſuited to the characters they had aſſumed. Lady Almeria ſeemed diſconcerted by her brother's obſervation, and immediately ſhunned the captivating Sultan, and mixed indiſcriminately with the motley circle;—but, alas! the heart's-eaſe in her noſegay availed her little. The elegant Amurath had raiſed certain flutterings within, which ſhe had never before experienced.

The baſket was ſoon emptied, and the blooming gardener had danced a minuet with a fair circaſſian, which gained them much applauſe, when Lady Almeria, determining if poſſible to know who had cauſed theſe new ſenſations, drew her brother aſide, and requeſted

queſted him to find out who the gentleman was, to whom he had given the roſe and violets; and intimated, by way of concealing her prepoſſeſſion in his favour, that ſhe had been offended at the freedom of his converſation.

Lord Belmour was extremely delicate in his ideas of the reſpect due to the female character. He knew his ſiſter would in no inſtance depart from the ſtricteſt propriety; but he thought it poſſible the gentleman might have put a miſconſtruction on her livelineſs. He wiſhed to clear up all miſtakes by a proper explanation, and he promiſed his ſiſter to give her the information ſhe deſired. He ſoon found an opportunity of requeſting the ſuppoſed offender to accompany him into a retired room.

When

When they were alone, he ſaid, "if "you are a man of honour, Sir, it is ne- "ceſſary that we for a few minutes quit "our aſſumed characters, and ſpeak face "to face."—"I can have no objection, "Sir, but be kind enough to give me "the reaſon for this ſingular propoſal." "I have ſome reaſon to believe, Sir, "that ſheltered under that diſguiſe, you "have inſulted, or at leaſt behaved with "improper freedom, to a woman of fa- "mily and reputation."—"Upon my "honour, Sir, I am not conſcious of "having given juſt ground of offence to "any one. I acknowledge I withdrew "rather abruptly from a maſk in the "habit of a tawdry ſhepherdeſs, and "carefully avoided her repeated at- "tempts to engage me. I hope, Sir, "this is not the inſult you came to "charge me with, if it is, I can make "no apology for my conduct, but con

"feſſing

" feſſing my motives. The lady had no-
" thing in her manner that ſuited my
" taſte;—and my mind was ſo captivated
" with the elegant perſon and deport-
" ment of a lady in a Spaniſh dreſs, that
" I could not help making every effort
" to draw her into converſation:—But,
" alas! I fear, I ſhall regret, to my lateſt
" hour, this temerity.—The delicate
" poignancy of her wit compleated the
" conqueſt her perſonal graces had firſt
" made.—I have no means of finding
" out what or who ſhe is;—and have
" nothing left me but to mourn in ſi-
" lence, and lament having enjoyed this
" faint glimpſe of happineſs, which I
" can form no rational idea of ever be-
" ing bleſſed with again."

Lord Belmour now began to ſuſpect his ſiſter's artifice; and in a milder tone, ſaid, " well, my good Sir, unmaſk, and

" perhaps

" perhaps this affair may be accommo-
" dated to the fatisfaction of all parties.
" I am no cynic, no enemy to love and
" gallantry, when it is compatible with
" honour and decorum." At this inſtant the gentlemen unmaſked, and ſtood for ſome ſeconds recognizing each others features, in a ſtate of pleaſing aſtoniſhment, — and ruſhing into each other's arms, they exclaimed,—" My
" Belmour!"—" My Egerton!"—" My
" much honoured friend!"—" My ever
" dear Charles!" An explanation now took place, which much concerned and ſurpriſed Mr. Egerton, as he was not conſcious of having been guilty of any offence againſt the lady, whom he declared to be the goddeſs of his idolatry; and, unleſs his friend could aſſiſt to find out and appeaſe her, (tho' he knew not what error he had committed,) he ſhould never more know peace.

A thought now ſtruck Lord Belmour, that his ſiſter was delicately averſe to truſting him with her real ſentiments, and meant to uſe him as Miranda did Marplot in the play, and he playfully reſolved to make repriſals, and turn her little artifice againſt herſelf. "I think, "my dear Egerton, I have hit upon an "expedient that will ſet your heart at "eaſe;—will you follow my directions?" "Implicitly, my Lord." "Then keep "cloſe in that corner, behind the ſtatue "of Apollo, and I will bring this for-"midable fair one, this haughty Infanta "into the room; and fear not but you "ſhall profit by our converſation."

He went in ſearch of his ſiſter, whom he ſoon found, and prevailed on to accompany him to an inner apartment, that they might talk without reſtraint. When he had drawn her as near the be-

before-mentioned corner as he desired, in a soothing and affectionate tone, he said, "Come, my dear Almeria, sit down, "you seem disconcerted and fatigued; "take off your mask and tell me in "what manner this insolent turk has "behaved;—for if he has dared to give "cause of offence to my sister, were he "the grand Seignior himself, he should "render a strict account for the smallest "indignity offered to the blood of the "Belmours." "Why,—I thank you,— "my dear Lord," hesitating at every word, taking off her mask, and fanning herself with great emotion, "but, in- "deed, I don't know that there was "much in it.—I fancy,—heigh ho!— "I fancy, my dear brother, I was a little "out of humour.—I did very wrong "to mention it to you—to be sure;—I "don't rightly know what I was going "to say,—O, I just wished to know

"who the gentleman was, that if I "ſhould chance to meet with him, in "any other place, I might behave to "him in a proper manner;—heigh ho! "—You know, Sir, we women have "little whims and etiquettes, to which "you gentlemen are utter ſtrangers;— "and ſo, as I was ſaying, you could "not find him:—I dare ſay, he would "have ſaid as much to every elegant "maſk in the room as he did to me."

"Why, my dear Almeria, (replied "his Lordſhip,) I find we have been "miſtaking each other.—I appre- "hended the turk had inſulted you, and "I have been ſeeking him to demand "ſatisfaction;—'tis well I did not meet "with him." "Satisfaction, my Lord, "for what?" "Why, for his inſolence, "to you, as I imagined." "Oh, my "brother! thank heaven that you did

"not

" not meet with him. He was guilty of
" no inſolence. He ſeemed gentle and
" mild as an inhabitant of the Empyrean
" regions,—and yet methought he
" looked haughty and diſdainful as
" contumely itſelf, at a maſk in the dreſs
" of an arcadian ſhepherdeſs, that re-
" peatedly endeavoured to attract his at-
" tention, whilſt he was converſing with
" me;—but as you can't find out who
" he is, I hope, my Lord, you'll think
" no more of this fooliſh affair.—Heigh
" ho!—I'm horridly tired of this fan-
" taſtic mummery.—Will you ſee if the
" Captain and Mrs. Rainsford are in-
" clined to return home?"

" Certainly, my dear;—but before
" I ſtir, anſwer me one queſtion; you
" know my whole heart is devoted to
" your intereſt and ſatisfaction, then
" for once, lay aſide your female whims

" and etiquettes, and tell me plainly " whether it was not *love*, rather than *diſ-* " *guſt*, that made you ſo ſolicitous to " find out who this ſaid Sultan might " be?" " O my dear, moſt abominable " teazing brother, how can you poſ- " ſibly think of aſking me ſuch a queſ- " tion?" " And O, my dear, moſt ex- " travagantly reſerved ſiſter, how can " you think of putting me off with ſuch " an evaſion inſtead of an anſwer?" " Bleſs me, my Lord, why, what would " you have me ſay?" " Bleſs me, my " Lady, why, I would only have a plain " anſwer to a plain queſtion." " Well, " you men are ſuch wretches, that if " you once ſet your mind upon knowing " any thing, there is no prevaricating " with you to any purpoſe. If you muſt " have it, I cannot deny but I did think " him the moſt agreeable,—pſhaw,—I " mean the moſt tolerable of any of the

" he

" he creatures I have ever converſed
" with.—Heigh ho!—but I dare ſay, I
" ſhould not think ſo if I was to ſee him
" again. It was only becauſe I was in
" a humour to be pleaſed.—Come, my
" dear Lord, let us ſee for our company."

" Moſt willingly, my dear Almeria;
" but not 'till I have your pardon for
" this little artifice, which your delicate
" contrivance put me upon.—I ſuſ-
" pected that you were playing off ſome
" little lady-like plot upon me; and I
" reſolved, if it proved ſo, that your
" puniſhment ſhould tread cloſe upon
" the heels of your crime.—And now,
" my dear Egerton, come forth, and
" enjoy the long dubious conqueſt, I
" have, with great military ſkill, ob-
" tained for you."

Egerton, almoſt overpowered with the happy diſcovery he had made, but diſtreſſed to think what Lady Almeria muſt feel when ſhe found he had been a witneſs to her acknowledgments, iſſued from his concealment with tremulous ſteps.—The ſlowneſs of his motion, and the perplexity of his addreſs as he approached her, gave her time to recover herſelf, and recollect her ſcattered ideas. She began to erect her head and play her fan, and a ſudden lucky thought came into her mind, that ſhe had not ſo far betrayed herſelf, but ſhe could bring it all off as a contrivance, by which ſhe had only ſeemed to fall in with the preconcerted ſcheme of her brother, to ridicule both him and his friend.

This thought had ſuch an happy effect on her ſpirits and imagination, that

as

as Egerton approached her, attempting to utter many unintelligible apologies for his ſituation, ſhe interrupted him, by turning to Lord Belmour with an air of extreme vivacity, and making a low courteſey, "I thank you and your friend, "my good brother, for having given a "little life and novelty to the enter-"tainment of the evening. Upon my "word, I was quite weary of the repe-"tition of ſenſeleſs pertneſs and hack-"neyed repartees, in the outer rooms; "and little did I expect to have varied "the ſcene to ſuch advantage, when "ſummoned to a tete-a-tete with my "grave brother. But when I acciden-"tally ſaw the ſparkling creſcent and "waving plume, thro' the wires of "Apollo's harp,—ha, thought I, my "wiſe brother, to be ſure, has ſome deep "ſcheme in his head by all theſe ſtrange

" queſtions; and I'll e'en humour the
" good gentleman, and form my face to
" bluſhing, and modulate my voice to
" ſighing, with all the ſeeming ſimplicity
" and innocent timidity I can muſter
" up.—And now, tell me, my dear miſ-
" chievous Adolphus, if I have not fairly
" taken you in?—I wiſh you and your
" friend joy of your ſuppoſed triumph;
" and, my dear Lord, to convince you
" I am the beſt natured creature in the
" univerſe, whenever you have a mind
" to entertain any other friend in the
" ſame way, I'll endeavour to act my
" part over again to your ſatisfaction;
" tho' to be ſure, it would henceforth
" want the charm of novelty to recom-
" mend it." This lively unexpected ſally of humour gained Lady Almeria a complete victory.

Mr.

Mr. Egerton had regained his preſence of mind, he bowed reſpectfully, and thanked her for not having annihilated him by her diſdain.—Her brother thanked her for her obliging condeſcenſion; but as ſhe had ſuch an agreeable fund of variety in her compoſition, he would not impoſe ſuch an irkſome taſk upon her as to act the ſame ſcene twice over. They ſought out Mr. and Mrs. Rainsford, who by this time had kept up their aſſumed characters 'till they were weary of them, and gladly embraced the opportunity of retreating.

Lord Belmour was ſo happy in meeting Mr. Egerton thus unexpectedly, that he inſiſted on his accompanying him home, which requeſt his friend had not power to refuſe. The cauſes of their not meeting ſooner were diſcuſſed, and

and an invitation given to the Belmour party to dine with Mrs. Egerton the next day; and they parted with every pleasing prospect that could fill the minds of friends, that loved, and longed to meet each other.

CHAP.

CHAP. XLI.

A MAN OF FASHION.

THE next day, juſt before the Belmour family were ready to ſet out to Mr. Egerton's, Sir George Morriſon ſent up his name to Lady Almeria.

She was dreſſed, and inſtantly went into the parlour. "A good day to you, "Sir George," "Your moſt obedient, "Madam; I had juſt heard you were in "Town, and could not reſiſt the im-"pulſe, to pay my earlieſt devoirs to "you."

"you." "You are very polite, Sir "George, but I presume the visit was in-"tended for my brother." "That must "be as you determine, Madam." "Then the visit is to his Lordship, Sir "George." "And can you persist in "your cruelty, Lady Almeria?" "No, "Sir George, I only persist in my good "resolutions.—You and I may be very "good friends, but we were never "formed to make each other happy in "the matrimonial way.—I have often "told you so; and take my word now, "once for all,—for, upon my honour, "I shall never change my mind." "Well "then, Madam, if you are really in "earnest, I will no longer trouble you "with my suit." "Now that's my good "Sir, I will henceforth love you as well "as ever I can; and if ever it is in my "power to do you a good office with "any other lady, my best services shall

"be

"be devoted to you." "I thank you,
"Madam.—You ſeem to be going out
"to dinner, may I be permitted to be of
"your party?" "Of my brother's party,
"if you pleaſe, Sir George.—We are
"going to make a viſit, where, I dare
"ſay, any friend of his will be wel-
"come." And ſhe went to let her brother
"know, who waited to accompany him.

It may here be proper to give the reader ſome information concerning the character ſo abruptly introduced to his preſence.—Sir George Morriſon was a young Baronet, lately come into poſſeſſion of a large eſtate, and a great deal of ready money. He was an only child, and had been ſpoiled by the ill judged indulgence of a fond mother;—had travelled with a tutor that was not to contradict him,—and returned, not abſolutely depraved in his morals, but with

ſuch

ſuch a taſte for diſſipation, and all the faſhionable follies of the countries he had viſited, as made him appear a moſt compleat coxcomb.

He had in a ſuperficial manner dipped into every art and ſcience;—had learned the names of their moſt eminent maſters;—got a few technical terms by rote,—and fancied himſelf a perfect connoiſſeur. With theſe acquiſitions he entered upon his paternal inheritance, and by the elegance and hoſpitality of his table, ſoon drew a large circle of acquaintance round him. The giddy diſciples of faſhion, adored him as the vicegerent of their favourite goddeſs. Thoſe who united ſenſe and ſentiment to a gentle nature, were ſorry, that a man, not void of underſtanding, had been ruined for want of a proper education;—whilſt thoſe who were endued with ſtrong abilities, but

were

were deſtitute of tenderneſs and conſideration, (and had happily enjoyed thoſe advantages, he had, thro' maternal weakneſs been deprived of,) held him in a degree of contempt not to be deſcribed. His ſeat was about twelve miles from Belmour-Lodge.—He had often heard Lady Almeria mentioned as the moſt accompliſhed woman in that part of the kingdom; and thinking an alliance with ſo ancient and reſpectable a family would add to his conſequence, he waited on her, and declared his intentions, in due form, to her mother.

Lady Belmour was all prudence and politeneſs.—Sir George was a character ſhe could by no means approve for a ſon in-law; but as ſhe had not the leaſt doubt of her daughter's ſentiments coinciding with her own, ſhe referred him entirely to Lady Almeria, telling him,

ſhe

ſhe ſhould never interpoſe her authority where her daughter's happineſs was concerned.—Sir George thanked her for her negative goodneſs; as, he preſumed, if ſhe did not chooſe to interpoſe in his favour, ſhe would not to his diſadvantage.—She aſſured him, ſhe would not.—She invited him to ſtay dinner, and introduced him to her ſon.

Lord Belmour was perfectly acquainted with his character. He was not a perſon he wiſhed to cultivate an intimacy with; but on the preſent occaſion, the reſpect due to his ſiſter, as well as the native politeneſs and benignity of his heart, enſured Sir George a very gracious reception.—He made a recital of his affections and his hopes, with all the florid vivacity of one that was courting admiration for himſelf, whilſt he was expreſſing his adoration of Lady Almeria.

He

He concluded his harangue by requeſting his Lordſhip's good offices with his angelic ſiſter, in his behalf. To this his Lordſhip replied, that he would do as much for Sir George Morriſon, as for ever a man in England;—that was, he would introduce him fairly to his ſiſter. She was entirely independent, therefore he had no right to direct her choice.—She was a woman of ſenſe and ſentiment, therefore he ſhould think himſelf highly culpable, were he to endeavour to influence her in an affair of ſuch conſequence to her future felicity.—He was accordingly introduced, and declared his paſſion with all the flighty enthuſiaſm of romance.

Lady Almeria heard his affected rhapſody with a ſmile of mirthful aſtoniſhment, which he miſtook for a ſmile of complacency, and thought his eloquence

quence had gained him an immediate conqueſt:—How then was he mortified, when her ladyſhip, with a ſarcaſtic playfulneſs in her countenance, replied, "I "would thank you, Sir George, for all "the fine things you have been addreſſing to me, did I not think you "were abundantly recompenſed by "having this opportunity of diſplaying "your oratorical powers. Should I ever "have the vanity to wiſh to hear my "poor perſon cœleſtializ'd, I would certainly apply to Sir George Morriſon,— "'till then, Sir, if you pleaſe, we will "only converſe on the footing of fellow "mortals; and as I have no thoughts of "changing my ſituation, that converſation may as well be held in public." So ſaying, ſhe roſe, and led the way to the drawing room, whither the mortify'd Baronet was conſtrained to attend her.

Several

Several viſits he paid her with the ſame ſucceſs, 'till he thought the ſeaſon demanded his removal to Town; where he had fixed his reſidence about a month before he heard of the arrival of the Belmour family. On this information a happy thought ſtruck him, that now was the time to renew his addreſſes. The figure he made in Town, he flatter'd himſelf, would have the deſired effect on Lady Almeria. With this impreſſion on his mind, he waited on that lively lady, as has before been mentioned; but finding her polite, good-humour'd, and determined as ever, he reſolved to give up all thoughts of an alliance with her, but ſtill keep up his acquaintance with the family, which he found was univerſally reſpected: He therefore gladly agreed to be Lord Belmour's gueſt, and accompany them in the family viſit they were going to make.

Never

Never were two parties more ſincerely rejoic'd at meeting each other, than thoſe who now met at Mrs. Egerton's. Never did three friends meet with more manly ſentiments of regard, or a ſtronger deſire of ſtrengthening thoſe ſentiments by a friendly intercourſe, than Lord Belmour, Captain Rainsford, and Mr. Egerton. There was ſuch an agreeable variety in their characters, and the modes of life they had been accuſtomed to, and ſuch a perfect coincidence of perception and principles, as rendered them fit to form the moſt agreeable trio imaginable; and Sir George Morriſon's eccentricity gave new life to the converſation: And the ladies congratulated themſelves, and each other, with ſuch animated overflowings of affection, on the felicity this meeting of the families would confer on every individual, as liberal and enlightened minds only can form an idea of.

CHAP. XLII.

A PROPOSAL.

IN the afternoon Miſs Forreſter ſent up her name. Mrs. Egerton, with that benevolent politeneſs that preſided over all her words and actions, aſked Lady Almeria and Mrs. Rainsford, whether they could be perfectly eaſy if ſhe was introduced. They aſſured her it would give them ſingular pleaſure to ſee Miſs Forreſter; they parted with her on friendly terms, and ſhould be happy to meet her again in the ſame manner.—

They

They with one voice expreſſed their eſteem for her many agreeable qualities, and could with pleaſure draw a veil over her foibles. Mrs. Egerton deſired Matilda to go to Miſs Forreſter, and tell her what company ſhe had, and that they ſhould all be extremely pleaſed with the addition of her's.

The younger Miſs Egerton left the room, her eyes ſparkling with good-nature. Lady Almeria, with an arch ſmile, tripped to the back of Sir George Morriſon's chair, and whiſpered, "Now, "Sir George, is your time. Here is a "Lady coming, whoſe eyes have done "more execution than the King's life "guards. Her heart, I am told, is ſtill "free, and I have a ſtrong preſentiment "the conqueſt is reſerved for you."—Sir George bowed.—Louiſa entered the room. Her figure attracted the admiration

tion of all preſent.—Tho' ſhe had paid ſeveral viſits to Mrs. Egerton, ſhe had not before been dreſſed to ſuch advantage; and her reſidence in Town had added much to her air and deportment ſince ſhe left Hamilton-Grange.

Her addreſs to Lady Almeria, Mrs. Rainsford, and the Captain, was cordially polite; to Lord Belmour rather conſtrained.—His Lordſhip introduced Sir George as a friend of his.—The Baronet accoſted her with an inundation of compliments, which ſhe returned in a ſtile ſo ſuited to his diſpoſition, that he was inſtantly prepoſſeſſed with a ſomething, that he miſtook for love;—and, perhaps it was ſomething as nearly allied to that paſſion, as a perſon ſo much in love with himſelf, could entertain for another. In half an hour's time he became quite enamoured, and all his converſation was either

either addreſſed to her, or ſhe was appealed to for a confirmation of what he advanced. This flattering preference from a man of Sir George's figure and fortune, gave ſuch a happy turn to her mind, as made her uncommonly polite and agreeable to the whole company.

Lady Almeria was delighted to ſee her project wear ſo promiſing an aſpect; and no leſs charmed with the diffident glances, and numberleſs tender aſſiduities of Mr. Egerton, which ſhe neither coldly ſhunned, nor affected to miſunderſtand. She might, perhaps, have been ſubject to a little good-natured raillery from her brother on the occaſion, but he was ſo deeply engaged in paying attentions of the like kind to Miſs Egerton, that he had not leiſure to obſerve what paſſed among the reſt of the company.

After

After tea, card tables were ſet, when Lady Almeria, approaching Mrs. Egerton with her accuſtomed lively eaſe, ſaid, "I would not for the univerſe, Madam, "break in upon the rules of your family; "but, I do think we are too happy and "friendly a company to be ſet down to "count the ſpots upon a pack of cards. "'Tis an excellent way of keeping com-"pany awake that are in the hum-drums; "but, I think, we have all life enough "to give the preference to a dance, if it "might be permitted." "I am much "pleaſed with your propoſal, Lady "Almeria, (replied Mrs. Egerton,) for "if I have any ſkill in the language of "ſighs and ſide glances, I think, there "are ſome in company that are ſo far "from being able to count the ſpots, "they would be apt to miſtake the "ſuits." A crimſon glow began to overſpread the cheek of Lady Almeria, but

Mrs. Egerton was too delicate to permit her to apply any part of the remark to herſelf, and inſtantly added, "don't you "think, Madam, Miſs Forreſter's fairly "caught at firſt ſight?" "I really think "ſhe is, Madam; whether ſhe is cap-"tivated by Sir George's, dreſs, his "title, or the profuſion of encomiums he "beſtows on her, I know not; but I re-"joice to ſee him in the ſame predi-"cament." Muſic was ordered; a young gentleman that had called on Mr. Egerton, aſked the favour of Matilda's hand; Captain Rainsford told his lady in a whiſper, that ſhe muſt be content to dance with her huſband, for he could not be ſo cruel as to attempt to part either of the three couples, who, (if he could read their thoughts) would ſcarce forgive him. Never was a more agreeable dance, or a happier party;—where every one

one is anxious to pleaſe, the endeavour cannot prove ineffectual.

When the company broke up, Sir George attended Miſs Forreſter to her lodgings. In the morning he paid her the acuſtomed devoirs, and entreated her permiſſion to repeat his viſit in the evening, and attend her to whatever party or place of amuſement ſhe intended to honour with her preſence. She received the overture with graciouſneſs, and told him ſhe was engaged to accompany a few friends to the Opera, and after to a private aſſembly at Lady Aſhton's. Sir George thanked her for the obliging information, was punctual to the time, had the ſatisfaction of handing the blooming Louiſa to and from her box, and from thence to Lady Aſhton's, where he was favoured with her hand; and, when the company broke up, attended

her to her lodgings. From that time he was very frequent in his viſits; they were cordially received, and in about a month after their firſt meeting ſhe permitted him to make propoſals to Mr. Waldron about ſettlements.

About the ſame time ſhe wrote to Mrs. Hamilton in a more confidential and obliging manner than ſhe had done ſince her reſidence in London; mentioned Sir George Morriſon's overtures, and even condeſcended to aſk her's, and Mr. Hamilton's advice on the momentous ſubject. Tho' the Colonel and his lady had no perſonal knowledge of Sir George, they were no ſtrangers to his family, his fortune, or his foibles; and they conſidered the intended union, with that liberality of ſentiment, which was the conſtant concomitant of all their deliberations.

"I

"I could have wiſhed, (ſaid Mrs. Ha-
"milton,) that Louiſa had fixed her
"affections on a perſon of more ſolidity;
"but, perhaps, that might not have
"contributed much to the happineſs of
"either. Tho' ſhe does not want ſenſe,
"her prudence is ſo inadequate to her
"vanity and volubility, that had ſhe
"married ſuch a gentleman as I ſhould
"have choſen for her, I fear they would
"have been mutual plagues to each
"other."

"Your ſentiments are always juſt, my
"Auguſta, (replied the Colonel,) I too
"thought, when I firſt preſented the
"ſweet girl to your embrace, that ſhe
"might one day prove a bleſſing to
"ſome worthy man; but from what we
"have heard of her diſpoſition, ſince
"ſhe has been wholly independent, I am
"really glad ſhe has made no worſe an

" election. Sir George, tho' vain and
" flighty, is as free from vice as moſt of
" our high bred young men of faſhion;
" —time, and proper treatment, may,
" perhaps, have a good effect on them
" both.—If you approve it, my love,
" write Louiſa word, that ſhe has our
" full approbation; and if ſhe chuſes I
" ſhould look over her ſettlements, I
" will do it with pleaſure: but, I pre-
" ſume, her mother's friend, Mr. Wald-
" ron, may be depended on, and may
" know more of the matter than I do.
" And tell her I mean to ſettle 10,000l.
" on her and her younger chil-
" dren after our deceaſe; which, in caſe
" ſhe leaves none, is to devolve to my
" nephew Rainsford.

The receipt of this letter gave addi-
tional ſpirits to Miſs Forreſter, and when
the

the contents were made known, by Mr. Waldron, to Sir George, it is natural to ſuppoſe the information by no means abated the warmth of his affection. He entreated Mr. Waldron to haſten the tedious preliminaries, that nothing might protract his felicity, when once he could prevail on his adored Miſs Forreſter to name the day that would render his happineſs compleat.

Mr. Waldron was as expeditious as an affair of ſuch conſequence would permit; counſellors were employed, and every thing carried on with the utmoſt propriety. The ſettlements were even beyond Louiſa's wiſhes; and whilſt theſe matters were adjuſting, Sir George attended her to every ſcene of pleaſure and amuſement: and it would be difficult to determine whoſe vanity was moſt flat-

tered. If Miſs Forreſter was delighted with the ſplendor of Sir George's equipage, the gaiety of his dreſs, and his implicit compliance with all her wiſhes; he was no leſs gratified by being publicly acknowledged as a favoured admirer, by ſo elegant and accompliſhed a lady, and one whoſe connexions were ſo reſpectable.

CHAP.

CHAP. XLIII.

A DRESSING-ROOM LECTURE.

WHILST every thing was in this happy train between Sir George and Miſs Forreſter, we are not to ſuppoſe the amiable families in St. James's-Square and Lower-Brook-Street had diſmiſſed their ſenſibilities, or were idly mingling with the diſſipated crowds that ſurrounded them. No, the tender emotions which had pervaded four minds ſo congenial, hourly encreaſed, as they became more acquainted with the virtues of each

other. They visited, they formed parties with their other friends, in which Miss Forrester and Sir George were frequently included; and it was a kind of miracle to see the Belmour and Egerton families asunder.

In this agreeable interchange of friendliness, without either of the gentlemen making a formal declaration, or once thinking of the propriety of applying to maternal authority for permission to do so, they continued, 'till the preparations for Miss Forrester's nuptials began to be the public topic of conversation. The two venerable dowagers, it must be supposed, were not blind to the tender intercourse of mutual affection that subsisted between the sons and daughters of each other, but their delicacy deterred them from speaking. Lady Belmour feared, if she mentioned to Mrs. Egerton

ton what ſhe had obſerved, it might be taken as the propoſal of a ſuperior, and not be underſtood in the manner ſhe wiſhed:—On the other hand, Mrs. Egerton feared, were ſhe to ſpeak, it might be thought by Lady Belmour, that ſhe aſſumed too much on the intimacy that ſubſiſted between them, and wiſhed to aggrandize her family by a double match; which, humble as ſhe was, ſhe knew wanted not the additional luſtre of a title, being already ſufficiently ancient and reſpectable.

Theſe punctilious niceties would undoubtedly have given way to the dictates of prudence, had not they been both perfectly ſatisfied with the interchange that was likely to take place. However, one day, after a morning excurſion, in which Sir George and Miſs Forreſter had accompanied them, and had been talk-

ing

ing of their intended union without much reſtraint, Lady Almeria retired to her dreſſing-room; ſhe was juſt ſeated at her toilet, when her mother entered her apartment. Lady Almeria roſe, "Has my mamma any commands for "me?" "No, my dear, ſit down; I "only came to have a little ſociable chat "about our friends;—every thing ſeems "to go on ſwimmingly between Sir "George and Miſs Forreſter." "Yes, "Madam, they ſeem to have got over "all difficulties, if any ever ſtood in their "way." "True, my dear, but what "could ſtand in their way, as they are "both independent?" "I don't know, "Madam; nothing, I think, but Miſs "Forreſter's airs, and thoſe ſeem to be "tolerably ſubſided." "I am glad they "are, and I think ſhe has now a fair "proſpect of happineſs before her in "her own way. Sir George and Miſs

"Forreſter

"Forreſter will never diſagree about the "paths they ſhall walk in;—their ideas "and purſuits ſeem quite congenial.— "But don't you think, Almeria, it "would be as well if ſome other people "followed Sir George's example in "one particular inſtance?" "What's "that, pray Madam? for I never heard "you ſet him up as a pattern for imita- "tion before." "I believe you did not; "but don't you think your brother "would act with as much propriety, if "he were to aſk Mrs. Egerton's per- "miſſion to addreſs her amiable daugh- "ter,—as to endeavour, by his name- "leſs, numberleſs attentions, to make "himſelf of conſequence to the young "lady, without knowing whether his "pretenſions may not interfere with "ſome favourite wiſh or ſcheme of her "worthy parent's?"

During

During theſe interrogations, Lady Almeria was ſenſible of many changes in her countenance, and many ſtrange palpitating commotions in her boſom. She knew Mr. Egerton's omiſſion had involved him in the ſame queſtions. She likewiſe feared her mamma would be diſpleaſed with *her*, for not having put an unreſtrained confidence in a parent, who had always treated her with the ſoothing familiarity of a friend. Theſe thoughts crowded ſo faſt on her imagination, that ſhe was a full minute ere ſhe attempted to reply. At length, with a heſitating voice, ſhe ſaid, "I'm "ſure, my dear Madam,—I think,—I "am ſure,—my brother did not intend "to be guilty of any omiſſion;—and "you know, Madam, as our families "have been ſo conſtantly together, he "might uſe thoſe attentions you ſpeak "of, without thinking any thing. I

"ſuppoſe,

" ſuppoſe, if he had been at a diſtance,
" and had only viſited in a formal way,
" he would have conſidered the matter
" in a different light."

" Your brother is much obliged to
" you, my dear:—You ſeem to have
" weighed this affair very minutely, and
" I think have made full as good an apo-
" logy for him, as he could have done
" for himſelf." " I muſt eſteem that as
" a high compliment, madam; but, I
" think, I have one thing more to offer
" in his behalf." " I ſhould be extremely
" glad to hear it, Almeria." " Why, I
" think, madam, tho' the gentlemen
" have the advantage over us in every
" other circumſtance, the mortifying
" taſk of making propoſals for marriage
" to thoſe of ſuperior years, perhaps
" of ſuperior rank in life, the awkward
" figure a gentleman muſt of neceſſity

" make

"make in ſuch a converſation, the fear
"of a refuſal, or of having ſuch terms
"inſiſted on as he cannot comply with
"without incurring the public cenſure,
"or his own diſapprobation, may well
"be eſteemed as an equivalent to any
"other adventual good they have to
"boaſt of;—and if, after all, the lady
"was permitted to have a will of her
"own, and was to reject him, how hu-
"miliating muſt it be." "Why indeed,
"Almeria, you ſeem to have conſidered
"your brother's caſe in every ſituation
"that could poſſibly occur; and the re-
"ſult of your deliberations is, that ra-
"ther than a young gentleman ſhould
"put his patience to the teſt, and bear
"to be diſconcerted for half an hour, he
"ſhould run the riſk of diſobliging thoſe
"whom it is his duty to obey; or of ren-
"dering himſelf and the object of his
"affections miſerable. O! my dear
"girl,

" girl, how excellently will a good coun-
" ſellor plead, when his client's caſe
" coincides with his own."

She roſe,—ſhe attempted to ſpeak,—ſhe juſt articulated—" pardon me, my " dear mamma, indeed I did not mean " to offend you," and ſhe attempted to kneel.—Lady Belmour caught her in her arms, " No, my dear, nor have you " offended; I have always wiſhed to " ſee your brother and you happily ſet-" tled; therefore you cannot wonder if " I have kept a ſcrutinizing eye over " your conduct. Your brother is of age, " conſequently independent; therefore, " had I perceived his affections taking a " wrong bias, I could only have remon-" ſtrated with mildneſs, pointed out im-" proprieties, and given him the beſt " advice in my power, which I ſhould " have been careful to have done the

" very

" very moment I had apprehended any
" prepoſſeſſion I could have diſapproved
" had taken place; and from his affecti-
" onate perſuadeableneſs of diſpoſition I
" had every thing to promiſe myſelf.
" For you Almeria, who are under age,
" and have conſiderable expectations
" from me, you may ſuppoſe I was
" equally anxious. I wiſhed not to
" aggrandize you by an alliance that
" might have glittered in the public
" eye, whilſt it had planted thorns in
" your boſom; no, the name of Bel-
" mour is ſufficient to give honour to
" all your deſcendants. I have obſerved,
" with innate ſatisfaction, the progreſs
" of your and your brother's ſuſcepti-
" bilities:—The Egerton family is an-
" cient and reſpectable; Miſs Egerton,
" I am convinced, is, of all her ſex, the
" woman beſt calculated to make Lord
" Belmour happy, and to give additi-

" onal

" onal honour to his rank and title; and
" ſince I have had the pleaſure of know-
" ing Mr. Egerton, and obſerving the
" *minutiæ* of his diſpoſition and cha-
" racter, I declare him to be the man I
" would have choſen for my Almeria,
" had the whole ſex been offered for my
" choice. And now, my dear, I hope
" all your hearts will be more at eaſe. I
" do not attribute your brother's or Mr.
" Egerton's omiſſion of making proper
" applications, to diſreſpect, but to a ti-
" midity inherent in delicate minds.
" Adviſe your brother, my dear, to make
" propoſals to Mrs. Egerton, and you
" may give him a hint to transfer ſimilar
" advice to his friend; I have no doubt
" but the worthy Mrs. Egerton will be
" as well pleaſed as myſelf in the union
" of the families."

It may be ſuppoſed Lady Almeria was delighted with the tender and liberal ſentiments of her mother. She knelt, ſhe kiſſed her hand, ſhe thanked her for having ſo generouſly freed her and her brother from a dilemma, from which they ſcarce knew how to extricate themſelves; as the longer the formal deliberation had been poſtponed, the more difficult it appeared.

This converſation laſted 'till the dinner-bell brought it to a haſty concluſion. When they met Lord Belmour and Mr. and Mrs. Rainsford in the dining room, a brighter beam of benignity than common illumined the countenance of the venerable parent, and a lively glow of ſatisfaction played on the ſmiling features of Lady Almeria.

CHAP.

CHAP. XLIV.

AN AGREEABLE EXPLANATION.

A Pretty large party was engaged to go to the play that evening, and to ſup at Lady Belmour's; among whom, as uſual, was the Egerton family.

Lady Almeria found an opportunity, in the afternoon, to relate to her brother ſo much of the converſation ſhe had with her mother, as concerned him; embelliſhing it with many lively remarks of her own, and concluding with, "So my

"dear

" dear brother, you ſee what theſe ſeniors
" expect. 'Tis a little hard that a gen-
" tleman cannot amuſe himſelf with a
" bit of gallantry, and try whether a la-
" dy's heart's made of flint or tinder,
" but he muſt be called upon to explain
" his intentions; juſt as if we poor fe-
" males were always ready to accept the
" firſt propoſal, for fear we ſhould never
" have another offer."

" I thank my ſiſter for her information,
" and for the entertaining manner in
" which ſhe has communicated it;—but
" pray, Almeria, had nobody any ſhare
" in theſe animadverſions but poor I?—
" Did not my friend Egerton claim ſome
" ſhare of my mother's attention?"
" Why you know, brother, I could not
" help what my mamma thought pro-
" per to ſay:—I believe ſhe did make
" ſome kind of reference to him, and

" ſaid

" ſaid ſomething about your giving him
" a hint; but what ſhe meant, her la-
" dyſhip knows beſt." " I don't know
" that, ſiſter; I believe your quickneſs
" of apprehenſion would make you as
" much miſtreſs of her ladyſhip's mean-
" ing as ſhe could be herſelf; and I think
" we ought to congratulate each other on
" this happy elucidation of matters, that
" might have long been involved in
" doubt and darkneſs. I confeſs I have
" often wiſhed to aſk my mother for her
" approbation, and Miſs Egerton for her
" permiſſion, and I had no fear of a re-
" fuſal from either; and yet, tho' it was
" the wiſh of my heart, I ſtill put it off
" from day to day;—but I can now de-
" lay it no longer than to-morrow.—Help
" me, my dear Almeria, to ſettle my
" mind, I never found myſelf ſo fool-
" iſhly agitated before."

" O,

"O, fie! my Lord, how can you ſay "*fooliſhly* agitated, when ſuch a prize as "Miſs Egerton is at ſtake?—Diffidence "and timidity, I have heard, are always "the attendants of real affection; and I "believe the remark is a very juſt one.— "For example, ſee with what eaſe and "celerity Sir George Morriſon has ſur- "mounted all theſe formidable forms, "and talks of his approaching happineſs "with the ſame degree of gaiety and "unconcern, as he would talk of a new "carriage or new liveries; and indeed "he has all theſe agreeable ſubjects of "contemplation before him at once. "To be ſure, he was beforehand with "your Lordſhip in having no parents "to conſult; and when Miſs Forreſter "had given him leave to make pro- "poſals to Mr. Waldron, the affair was "as good as concluded.—Well, and ſo "to-morrow is to be the day of trial?"

"Ay,

"Ay, my ſiſter, perhaps with ſome-
"body elſe as well as me."—"Well,
"what's that to me, you know?—But
"now, my dear Adolphus, how do you
"intend to break this momentous matter
"to my mamma?" "Why in the beſt
"manner I can, and that, I fear, will be
"awkward enough; but I can never
"think any mortification too much, if
"Miſs Egerton's hand may be obtained
"by it." "Then pull up a good ſpirit,
"my Lord, and never mind it; for I'm
"ſure you've only to aſk and have.
"But don't you think the taſk of
"ſpeaking to Mrs. Egerton will be
"more difficult than to my mamma?"
"I believe it will." "Then my beſt
"brother, let me put you in a way. I'm
"ſure your friend Egerton would almoſt
"lay down his life to oblige you; give
"him inſtructions to make a propoſal
"to his mother in your preſence, as at

" your requeſt, and when he has opened " the cauſe, it will be an eaſy matter " for you to put in your plea." " Thank " you, my dear inventive ſiſter, I un- " derſtand you; and when he has done " me this good office, I can do no leſs " than return it in kind.—This is a good " hint, and properly managed, may " ſtand us both in ſtead; let us make a " party with the Egerton family to Ken- " ſington-Gardens to-morrow morning, " do you and Miſs Egerton favour our " deſign and attend us with your good " wiſhes, and we'll try if we can't ſet all " our hearts at eaſe before our return."

The evening party met, were agreeably entertained at the Theatre, and Lady Belmour, ſeeing Sir George Morriſon and Miſs Forreſter in one of the next boxes, ſent to requeſt the favour of their company to ſpend the evening.

They

They accepted the invitation and joined the party to St. James's-Square.—Lord Belmour's mind was ſo occupied with the part he had to act the next day, that he was, in ſpite of his beſt endeavours to the contrary, frequently abſent. Miſs Forreſter perceived and rallied him upon it. Sir George had mentioned a new chariot that he had ordered; he ſaid he had conſulted many leiſure hours in conſidering of the colours and devices with which he ſhould like to have it embelliſhed. Lady Almeria hoped he would favor her with a deſcription of the deſign he had fixed on. "Why, Madam, the ground is to be "cerulean, the pannels ornamented "with a border of gold foliage, and at "each corner a bunch of ſnow-drops and "hepaticas tied with purple ribband; "—I made choice of thoſe flowers, "Madam, becauſe they are ſome of the

" earlieſt blooms of ſpring, and I pre-
" ſume, will be in the perfection of
" their beauty by the time my carriage is
" finiſhed. Miſs Forreſter's arms and
" mine quartered of courſe, and ſur-
" rounded with a wreath of myrtle, en-
" twined with olive. Near the top on
" each ſide, Hymen and Cupid, with
" their hands united, ſtrewing roſe-buds
" beneath; and round the top a foliage
" of oak leaves in gold intertwiſted with
" ivy; the lining, I think, muſt be
" white, with a fringe of green and gold."
" Taſte in its higheſt elegance, Sir
" George," ſaid Lady Almeria. " True,
" ſiſter," ſaid Lord Belmour, ſtarting from a reverie, " Sir George's taſte is
" always exquiſite;—but what freſh in-
" ſtance has he given?"

Miſs Forreſter, who ſat at ſome diſtance, had been liſtening with pleaſure and

and attention to the florid deſcription, and mortified that Lord Belmour had paid ſo little regard to what ſhe thought a matter of ſuch conſequence, replied with quickneſs, "This abſence of mind "might appear excuſeable, my Lord, "were you as near the unchangeable "ſtate as Sir George is ſuppoſed to be; "but as you give us no ground for ſuch "an apology, I really know not what "you can advance in your own de-"fence." "Were I in that enviable "ſtate, Madam, I could have nothing "to offer in extenuation of the inatten-"tion I have been guilty of;—when all "doubts and fears are vanquiſhed, and "our happineſs ſeems within our reach, "what a mind muſt that be that can "wander one moment from the pleaſing "proſpect! Sir George would deem it "little leſs than blaſphemy againſt your "charms, were he to be abſorbed in

"thought, and Miſs Forreſter preſent." Louiſa bowed, and was ſo pleaſed with this compliment, that ſhe ſmiled moſt graciouſly on his Lordſhip for the reſt of the evening.

Before ſhe took leave, ſhe drew Lady Almeria and Miſs Egerton aſide, and told them ſhe wanted to conſult them on a very particular occaſion, and aſked them if they were engaged for the next morning.—Lady Almeria replied they were, but did not mention how, leſt ſhe ſhould have offered to accompany them, (which ſhe feared might have put by the intended *eclairciſſement*) but ſaid, if the following morning would be agreeable, they would with pleaſure attend her.—She ſaid it would be rather more convenient, as ſhe ſhould have more time to ſend to different people; they muſt bring Mrs. Rainsford and Miſs Matilda;

Matilda; ſhe muſt have the opinion of all her friends. The hour was fixed, and the company ſeparated; but not 'till Lord Belmour had engaged his friend Charles, and Lady Almeria, Mrs. Egerton and the young Ladies, to call on them the next morning for an airing to the gardens.

About twelve o'clock they ſet out.—Lady Belmour, Mrs. Rainsford, and Miſs Egerton, in one coach; Mrs. Egerton, Lady Almeria, and Matilda in the other; and the three gentlemen on horſeback.—When they came to Hyde-Park-Corner, Lord Belmour related to his friends the converſation he had with his ſiſter the day before. "And "now, what ſay you, Egerton? ſhall we "help each other thro' this ceremonious "affair as well as we can?—We know "each other's minds, I preſume, and I

" hope we have no cauſe to deſpair of " an adequate return from thoſe to " whom we have offered up our hearts " and affections; and I do think, (with " reverence be it ſpoken,) that there is " not a couple of more reaſonable, kind " hearted, conſiderate old ladies in the " three kingdoms, than thoſe we have to " apply to." " I have all the reaſon in " the world to be of your Lordſhip's " opinion, (replied Charles,) and have " often been going to aſk your good " offices with Lady Belmour, but ſtill " a kind of—I don't know what,—has " prevented me; but thus called upon, " we can make no heſitation, and my " comfort is, I ſhall be freed from my " ſuſpenſe firſt, as Lady Belmour's " rank claims the precedence in our ap- " plications." By this time the coaches ſtopped at the Palace-Gates; they entered the gardens, and, to the great ſatisfaction

tisfaction of the two lovers, found juſt company enough to make the walks appear cheerful, and give a degree of animation to the ladies, without danger of having their deſigns fruſtrated by intruſion or obſervation.

Lord Belmour was particularly attentive to his mother; the amiable lady ſuſpected his motive, but ſhe was too good-natured to increaſe the agitation of his mind, which was evident in his countenance, by any aſſumed gravity or ſhyneſs in her behaviour. When they had taken a few turns in an open walk, he thought her Ladyſhip ſeemed fatigued, and aſked permiſſion to hand her to a ſeat in one of the ſerpentine walks, which happened to be quite free from company. She conſented, and he gave Egerton a look to follow them. They were ſcarcely ſeated, when he came up,

and with a profound bow and a hesitating voice, hoped her Ladyship was not indisposed. "Not at all, Sir, I am rather "in uncommonly good spirits this morning; but your careful friend would "have me sit down, for fear I should be "tired.—Pray be seated, Mr. Egerton, I "really think you and Adolphus are more "hurried with this little excursion than "I am."—Mr. Egerton attempted to speak, but the agitation of his mind stopped his voice. Lord Belmour hem'd,—and hem'd again.—At length he said, "why, I fear, Madam, my "friend and I appear to great disad-"vantage at present. He has long "wished for a favourable opportunity "of speaking to your Ladyship on a "subject on which more than his life,— "his *happiness* depends." "Never talk "of apppearances, my Lord:—You "both appear extremely well, but ra-

"ther

" ther long faced, methinks;—but tell
" me, Mr. Egerton, in what inſtance
" your happineſs depends upon me?—
" for your friend ſeems ſo inclined to
" circumlocution, that I fear my atten-
" tion will be tired before he comes to
" the point."

Egerton had collected his deranged ideas, and encouraged by Lady Belmour's eaſe and cheerfulneſs, he replied, " His Lordſhip has truly ſaid, Madam, " that more than my life depends on " the preſent moment. All my proſ- " pects of happineſs have long been cen- " tred in the hopes of one day calling " Lady Almeria mine.—Can you, Ma- " dam, pardon my preſumption?—Can " you overlook the want of a title, and " accept in its ſtead the moſt ardent af- " fection, and my moſt unintermitting " endeavours to render her happy?"—

" I

"I think I can very readily do all this, "Sir;—Your preſumption does not ap- "pear to me to be very great, becauſe "your eſtate deſerves as good a fortune "as Almeria has to bring you. As to "a title, ſhe has one of her own, which I "had much rather ſee her retain with a "man of Mr. Egerton's virtues, than "ſink it with one who had nothing but "a ſuperior title and eſtate to recom- "mend him." The overjoyed Egerton bent his knee, bowed upon her hand, and thanked her for her unprecedented goodneſs, in a ſtyle of rapture. "And, "pray, Sir, have you mentioned this "affair to your worthy mother?" "No, "Madam, I could not think of men- "tioning it to any body 'till I had your "Ladyſhip's permiſſion." "Well, Sir, "then as we have begun to talk of "buſineſs let us e'en go on with it. "Lord Belmour, will you go and re-

"queſt

"queſt the favour of Mrs. Egerton's
"company for a few minutes?" "Moſt
"gladly, Madam, if you will be pleaſed
"to extend the ſame indulgence to me,
"my friend has juſt experienced."
"You are for making conditions then;
"well let us hear them." "I have
"every thing to hope, Madam, from
"your maternal tenderneſs. Miſs Eger-
"ton's merits have made an alliance
"with her ſo neceſſary to my future
"enjoyments thro' life, that without
"your conſent, and intereſt to procure
"Mrs. Egerton's, I ſhall be the moſt
"miſerable mortal exiſting." "I
"thought, my Lord, when you began
"to preface for Mr. Egerton, with ſuch
"hemming and heſitating, there was
"ſomething more than mere friendſhip
"in the caſe. As I have begun to be
"gracious, I muſt not break off in the
"middle.

" middle. I eſteem Miſs Egerton's " beauty and amiabilities in as high a " degree as any body, but a young gen- " tleman in love, could do. I ſhould " be proud to addreſs her by the tender " appellation of daughter; and what in- " tereſt I have with Mrs. Egerton ſhall " be exerted in your behalf;—and now " I have acceded to your conditions, I " hope you will fulfil my requeſt."

His Lordſhip thanked her with the moſt animated expreſſions of gratitude and affection, and haſted to bring Mrs. Egerton to give her ſanction to the double union that was to connect the families. He ſoon returned, and reſpectfully putting Mrs. Egerton's hand into his mother's, he ſaid, " I hope, Madam, " you will plead my cauſe with ſucceſs." " I will do my beſt, my dear;—and

" have

" have you any cauſe to plead too, Mr.
" Egerton?" " No, Madam, I have
" only to make my mother's heart glad
" by a repetition of your condeſcenſion."
" Then, Sir, you and your friend may
" return to your company, who muſt
" certainly be much ſurpriſed at being
" thus deſerted; and we will meet you
" at the end of the walk with what con-
" venient ſpeed we may."

CHAP.

CHAP. XLV.

THE CONCLUSION.

THE two gentlemen returned to the ladies, congratulating each other on the agreeable manner in which Lady Belmour had received and anſwered their applications.—When LordBelmour requeſted Mrs. Egerton's company to the ſeat, Captain Rainsford obſerved Lady Almeria's countenance change,—he gueſſed the cauſe, but was too polite to mention it;—but on ſeeing the gentlemen return with exultation ſparkling

ling in their eyes, he congratulated her on the happy event, which, he ſaid, wanted not words to explain.—The elder ladies ſoon joined them, and they returned to Town with ſatisfaction beaming in every eye. From that time all diſagreeable reſtraint was removed, and they viſited as declared and accepted lovers.

The next morning the young ladies went according to their appointment to Miſs Forreſter's lodgings; their eyes were ſaluted with an inundation of ſilks, laces, and millinery; and the important cauſe of their invitation was, they were informed, to aſſiſt that lady in the choice of her bridal ornaments. Long and learned was the conſultation, and ended in Miſs Forreſter's chooſing every thing the moſt fanciful and elegant ſhe could deviſe. Before their departure Sir George

ſent

ſent up his name. When Lady Almeria ſhewed him the patterns Louiſa had fixed on, he was in raptures; her taſte was ſo ſimilar to his own, that he was ſure they ſhould be the happieſt couple that ever exiſted.—Lady Almeria and Miſs Egerton perhaps might be of a different opinion. Lady Almeria aſked if the happy day was fixed; Sir George ſaid, "No, "Miſs Forreſter has condeſcended to "name the week, and I muſt beg "your ladyſhip to intercede in my be-"half for an early day in that week." "That I will moſt earneſtly, Sir George, "(replied ſhe) and I'll take no denial. "Miſs Forreſter is it next week?" "No, Madam, the week after." "Why, "then it ſhall be Monday." Louiſa ſaid "No, I ſhall not have my dreſſes ready." "Well then, it *ſhall* be Thurſday." The Ladies all joined in the requeſt and Louiſa aſſented. The day arrived,

the

the wedding was public and ſplendid; the chariot, the liveries, the dreſſes of the bride and bridegroom, were the object of admiration among all their acquaintance; and Sir George and Lady Morriſon were deemed one of the happieſt couples in Town, becauſe one of the gayeſt.

Lord Belmour and Mr. Egerton as far ſurpaſſed Sir George in real and durable affection, as he did them in parade and outward profeſſions; they knew themſelves poſſeſſed of the hearts they prized, and could receive no additional happineſs from being gazed at, and congratulated by the circle of their acquaintance. It was therefore agreed to defer their nuptials 'till the morning they were to leave London. Settlements were drawn up, cloaths were made, and all proper arrangements concluded without

hurry

hurry and without noiſe. Lady Belmour inſiſted on the whole Egerton family going down with her for one month at leaſt, and during that time ſhe ſhould fix on a place for her future reſidence. Mrs. Egerton could make no objection to this obliging propoſal; free as ſhe was from the leaſt taint of vanity, it muſt be ſuppoſed ſhe could not but be highly delighted with ſeeing her daughter ſo ſplendidly and at the ſame time ſo eligibly ſettled. Another inducement, tho' indeed ſhe wanted no other, was the pleaſure ſhe promiſed herſelf from a perſonal knowledge of Colonel Hamilton and his lady, whoſe characters ſhe ſo much admired. Lady Almeria quite approved the ſcheme, as ſhe ſaid, ſhe thought it would be too hard upon herſelf and Miſs Egerton to give up their names, their liberties, all that was dear to woman, promiſe *obedience*, (horrid word!)

and

and plunge over head into the cares of a family all at once; for her part, ſhe ſhould like to be her mamma's gueſt for two or three months, and her mamma Egerton's for the reſt of her life.

About the middle of April, Lady Belmour ſent orders to the Lodge for preparation to be made for the reception of the family the beginning of May at fartheſt.—On the firſt of that cheerful month, the two amiable pairs were united at St. James's Church, and the happy party ſet out immediately for Belmour-Lodge, where they arrived amidſt every demonſtration of joy that could be teſtified by the ſurrounding villagers. The day after their arrival Mr. and Mrs. Rainsford went to pay their reſpects at the Grange, and by deſire of the whole happy family, invited the Colonel aud his Lady to dine at the

Lodge

Lodge the next day. A friendly intercourſe commenced between them, and their meetings were frequent and unceremonious.

When the time of viſiting was a little over, and Lady Belmour began to enquire for a houſe, Lady Almeria and the new Lady Belmour jointly petitioned her to lay aſide all thoughts of a ſeparate reſidence, as both houſes were large and commodious; and ſhe ſhould have what ſet of apartments, and what number of ſervants ſhe pleaſed, appropriated to her own uſe; and it would make both the families happy if ſhe would reſide with them at her pleaſure, ſometimes with one, ſometimes with the other. Her ladyſhip thanked them for this teſtimony of affection, and ſaid ſhe would agree to the propoſal on certain terms, which were, that ſhe would

pay

pay for her own and her ſervants board in ſuch a manner as was ſuitable to her rank and fortune; and that they ſhould promiſe not to let her preſence be any reſtraint upon their behaviour or way of life, and ſhe would have liberty to retire to her own apartments whenever ſhe choſe. To this the ladies agreed, and the amiable Dowager rejoined, "and "how muſt we manage with the worthy "Mrs. Egerton? I'm ſure her company "muſt be as deſirable to her ſon and "daughter, as mine can be to you and "your brother, my dear Almeria; and "the ſweet lively Matilda will be an ac-"quiſition to whatever family ſhe fa-"vours with her company." "We "have made the ſame propoſal, Madam, "to my mamma Egerton, (ſaid Lady "Almeria,) and ſhe has in part ac-"cepted it in the manner you have "done;—ſhe will pay for the board of

"herſelf,

"herſelf, Miſs Egerton, and their ſer-
"vants;—but ſhe will call a ſmall
"houſe her own that ſtands by the ſide
"of the pleaſure ground, and there ſhe
"will retire when ſhe pleaſes, and ſay
"ſhe's at home." Theſe points were ſettled to the entire ſatisfaction of both families.

Two months elapſed ere they could fix the day of ſeparation;—and about the end of the firſt, Sir George and Lady Morriſon came into the country.—They repeated the matrimonial farce they had acted in Town with great elegance and applauſe. Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton behaved with the greateſt friendſhip and cordiality to them; and tho' they did not emulate the characters of thoſe worthy relatives, yet they did much good in the neighbourhood of Morriſon-Manor; for the vanities and foibles of the rich

cannot

cannot be gratified without the poor deriving ſome benefit from them.

The Egerton family departed to the Park, where they were received with every mark of reſpect by their acquaintance. It was Lady Almeria's pride and pleaſure to keep up every family arrangement, every hoſpitable cuſtom that had rendered the manſion reſpectable for a ſeries of years. The viſiting day was made doubly brilliant and agreeable. Mrs. Egerton's apartments were open to the elderly gentlemen and ladies, who had known and loved her from her firſt appearance at the Park;—whilſt Mr. Egerton and his Lady had their rooms filled with the younger claſs, both married and ſingle. Freedom and ſatisfaction ſmiled in every countenance; and every one joined the dance, the card-table, or the converſation party, as the

inclination of the moment impell'd. The dining-room was furniſhed with an elegant cold collation, ſervants in waiting to accommodate every party when they choſe to retire for refreſhment, and gueſts withdrew when they pleaſed, without diſturbing or intruding on the reſt of the company.—A family of any diſtinction could not have incurred a greater diſgrace, than not to appear at Egerton-Park on a public day.

Lady Almeria's vivacity, eaſe, and politeneſs, made her almoſt adored by her huſband;—and all who had the happineſs to be ranked among the number of her friends, looked up to her as the moſt perfect pattern of all that was graceful, amiable, or praiſe-worthy, either in public or private life.

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THE END.